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**Austrian Studies** is a yearbook devoted to reflecting sustained interest in the distinctive cultural traditions of the Habsburg Empire, the Austrian Republics and the period of German annexation. Its focus is Austrian culture from 1750 to the present. Contributions are also encouraged on the culture of former areas of the Habsburg Empire and on the work of people of Austrian origin living abroad. The General Editors are Florian Krobb (Florian.Krobb@nuim.ie) and Journal (info@austrianstudiesjournal.org/), and the Reviews Editor is Dora Osborne (do38@st-andrews.ac.uk).

Austrian Studies publishes articles in English together with a selection of book reviews, with the aim of making recent research accessible to a broadly based international readership. Each volume has a coherent but wide-ranging theme.

#### ▼General Information

**Call for Papers:** AS 26, 2 (2018). Each themed issue proceeds through a Call for Papers. AS 26 will have the theme of Austria in Transit: Displacement and the Nation State: see this PDF document for more. This issue will collect papers drawn from a workshop to be held on 31 August-2 September 2017 at King's College London. See the workshop programme (PDF) for more.

**Notes for Contributors.** Detailed guidance for those proposing papers can be found in this PDF document. Unsolicited articles with no immediate relevance to the current thematic calls are also welcome, but can only be included in future issues if critical mass accrues. Suggestions for book reviews and features (anniversaries, obituaries, etc.) are always welcome. Finally, colleagues who would like to discuss possible future issues, for which they would act as guest editors, are invited to contact the General Editors.

**Books for review.** Each Austrian Studies yearbook carries a substantial reviews section. Publishers wishing to submit books for review should send them to the Reviews Editor: Dr Dora Osborne, Buchanan Building, Union Street, St Andrews, Fife KY16 9PH.

**Sample.** Originally published in Austrian Studies 11 (2003), Lisa Silverman's article Repossessing the Past? Property, Memory and Austrian-Jewish Narrative Histories (click on the title to read the PDF) considers the confiscation of Austrian-Jewish property during the Holocaust and its literary representation.

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# ARTICLES

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# Language challenges faced by international graduate students in the in a Malaysian University

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## Abstract

The command of English reading strategies and skills for graduate students is an essential concern as postgraduates are especially dependent on reading and writing skills to succeed in their higher studies. This study examines how international graduate students in a Malaysian public university perceive and overcome academic reading difficulties. The target population included all graduate students from Yemen, an Arab country, studying at Universiti Sains Malaysia. Data were collected using questionnaires, focus group interviews, and journal writing. While quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, qualitative data were analysed through content analysis. The results show that most of the academic reading difficulties faced by international graduate students were five: taking brief and relevant notes, using their own words in note taking, working out meaning of difficult words, identifying supporting ideas/examples, and managing their time for completion of reading academic materials. To overcome academic reading difficulties, international graduate students used strategies such as enrolling in some intensive English language courses, attending workshops organised in the University, attending colloquiums organised in their schools, getting help from other graduate students, and reading books on English for academic purposes.

**Keywords:** Malaysia, academic programs, identifying supporting ideas

## Introduction

Poor readers do not realise the importance of effective reading strategies and they lack the ability to monitor reading activities (Cubukcu, 2008). Although it may be claimed that all international students in any context face academic difficulties (Choi, 2006; Kuo, 2011; Phakiti & Li, 2011; Mahfoodh, 2014), there is a need for studies that go beyond this generalisation, through examining these specific aca-

ademic difficulties. Focusing on the evaluation of international graduate students' learning experiences in their MA and MEd degree programs in Malaysia, Kaur and Sidhu (2009) found that graduate students' problems were related mostly to academic adjustment. Later, this claim was supported by Yusoff (2012, p. 355) who stated that "Although the number of international students on campuses continues to increase; only a limited number of recently published studies have examined this topic in Malaysia".

It is important here to indicate that the term academic difficulties is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of difficulties that can be related to academic literacy, language skills, learning practices specific to host university settings, and learning unfamiliar academic conventions (Young & Schartner, 2014). However, academic difficulties reported in various studies are not the same for all international students, because some of these academic difficulties can be discipline specific. For example, TESOL postgraduate international students have academic difficulties related to aspects of teacher preparation (Phakiti & Li, 2011), which differ from difficulties encountered by international students taking other courses or in other fields of study in host universities.

Thus, the main purpose of this study is to investigate how a group of international students in a Malaysian public university overcome academic reading difficulties. Generally speaking, the findings of this study can increase awareness concerning international students' learning experiences in Malaysian public universities. This study also contributes to research focusing on international students in the Asia-Pacific region, which has not been given adequate attention in research and publications. This, in turn, can contribute to policy and decision-making processes which should be taken to help international students in Malaysian universities overcome their academic difficulties. Additionally, this study has its own contributions as it is one of the very few studies that have examined academic reading difficulties faced by international graduate students in Malaysia.

Most international students in Malaysian universities are from the Middle Eastern and Arab countries (Pandian, Baboo & Mahfoodh, 2014). The top source Arab countries of international students' enrolment in Malaysia are Yemen, Iraq and Libya (Yusoff, 2012; Kassim, 2013). Although students from these countries share the same first language which is Arabic and they belong to the Islamic culture, they are culturally and educationally diverse. They are educationally diverse because the system of education and its policies differ from one Arab country to another. Culturally, these students are diverse because it has been argued that within Arab countries in Asia and Africa, there are numerous sub-cultures and religious and ethnic minorities (Hammad et al., 1999). International students pursuing their higher studies in Malaysian universities have to use English in their academic activities. So, they use English for doing presentations, writing assignments, writing proposals, and writing their theses. Also, the materials the students read and refer to are all in English language. Although Bahasa Malaysia is used in Malaysian universities, international students have to use English as the medium of academic communication. Malaysian universities have adopted English language in several post-

graduate and undergraduate programs to attract more international students from the Middle East, Africa, Asian countries, and from other parts of the world.

Along with the noticeable increase of international students in Malaysia, the need to conduct research on their academic difficulties, experiences, and sociocultural adaptation has been widely emphasised by several researchers in the Malaysian context (e.g. Kaur & Abdul Manan, 2008; Kaur & Sidhu, 2009; Yusoff, 2012; Singh, Pandian & Singh, 2016; Mahfoodh, 2014; Pandian et al., 2014; Trahar, 2014; Shafaei, Nejati, Quazi & von der Heide, 2016). International students in Malaysia have been the focus of these studies which have revealed that language and culture are two of the major barriers for international students' adjustment and achievement. Regarding this, Yusoff and Chelliah (2010) pointed out that international students' adjustment to a new culture is considered to be challenging and stressful. Consequently, academic demands and the challenges of adjustment to the new culture can put international students in Malaysia at a greater risk. However, there is a lack of specific research that deals with academic reading difficulties faced by international graduate students.

#### **Literature review**

A growing number of studies have investigated how students from different linguistic, educational and cultural backgrounds experience, survive, and succeed in overseas contexts, especially English speaking countries. Studies that have addressed academic experiences of international students from various perspectives in various contexts have concluded that language and culture are two of the major barriers to international students' successful adaptation.

In a USA context, Lin and Yi (1997) examined Asian international students' problems and found that many often needed extra time for reading. The authors also pointed out that international students' poor English contributed significantly to their academic problems because it stood as a barrier to success within their academic environment. Recently, in the USA context, Sandekian, Weddington, Birnbaum and Keen (2016) found that Saudi female students' inadequate level of English proficiency was a challenge in completing their graduate work. Using a qualitative case study, Hirano (2016) explored the experiences of refugee students with academic reading in a USA college. Hirano collected data using interviews, observations and written documents, and found that refugee students encountered various difficulties with academic reading. One difficulty the students faced could be attributed to the nature of reading activities at college level. Another difficulty was the amount of reading the students had to do at college, which was not expected by the students, compared to the reading tasks they had at high schools in their countries of origin. Furthermore, the students had also some difficulties that were related to English, which was not their first language. Insufficient educational background was also one of the difficulties that affected students' reading comprehension. Hirano examined also the strategies used by the refugee students to cope with academic reading challenges. One strategy was reading selectively using the study guides and PowerPoint slides given by their lecturers. In addition to this, to cope with academic reading challenges, students tried to enhance their academic reading

experiences through finding moments and places to do reading, rereading after lectures, getting support from peers and tutors, seeking help from professors, and using dictionaries.

Employing a mixed-methods design, Young and Schartner (2014) investigated international students' adjustment at a UK university and found that at the beginning of their studies they encountered various academic adjustment difficulties which could be attributed to their unfamiliarity with conventions of the host university. Although Young and Schartner did not focus exclusively on academic reading, they revealed that students faced academic reading difficulties. In a recent study in the UK, Kuzborska (2016) examined international students' perspectives that guided their academic reading practices. The author found that academic reading difficulties encountered by international students could not be attributed to their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary or a reader's cognition; rather these difficulties were associated with their abilities to interact socially with other members in their academic community.

In an Australian context, Novera (2004) revealed that the difficulties international students faced while using English language were significant barriers to learning, and an important factor in their cultural and educational adjustment. Phakiti and Li (2011) examined general academic difficulties, academic reading, and writing difficulties among Asian graduate students undertaking a Master's degree in TESOL in an Australian university. The authors found that students' academic difficulties were associated with the management of reading and writing tasks. They also pointed out that there were strong associations among general academic difficulties, academic reading, and writing difficulties.

In New Zealand, Zhang and Brunton (2007) explored Chinese students' experiences and reported that language abilities directly influenced their educational and social opportunities to have quality relationships with host nationals. In another study on international students in New Zealand, Campbell and Li (2008) revealed that language difficulties were great barriers for Asian students when engaged in various academic activities such as communicating effectively with lecturers and other students, listening to lectures, following instructions, understanding assessment criteria and procedures, completing assignments, and doing exams and tests.

Studies on international students in the Malaysian context have been very few (see Kaur & Sidhu, 2009; Yusoff & Chelliah, 2010; Singh et al. 2016; Mahfoodh, 2014). Even these published studies have merely focused on general academic and social problems faced by these students. Focusing on international students in two public universities, Kaur and Sidhu (2009) examined graduate students' learning experiences in their MA and MEd degree programs and found that graduate students' major problems were related to pressures of undertaking and coping with the requirements of graduate programs. Although Kaur and Sidhu reported some significant findings, their study did not focus solely on international students but also included Malaysian graduate students. Studying the psychological and sociocultural adjustment problems among international students, Yusoff and Chelliah (2010) found that the factors that affected international students' psycho-

logical and sociocultural adjustment problems were English language proficiency, social support, and some personality variables.

Recent related studies on international students in Malaysia also include Singh et al. (2016), Pandian et al. (2014), Mahfoodh (2014), Trahar (2014), and Shafaei et al. (2016). In a recent study, Mahfoodh (2014) examined international undergraduate students' oral academic socialisation and found that language problems were a major difficulty for international undergraduate students in their oral academic activities such as oral presentations and group discussions. Although recent studies such as Singh et al. (2016) and Pandian et al. (2014) have examined issues related to international students in Malaysia, these studies have not examined academic reading difficulties. While Singh et al. (2016) examined how international students overcame their academic listening problems, Pandian et al. (2014) have focused on international students' perceptions of the effect of multiculturalism on the study programs in some Malaysian public universities. However, Trahar (2014) used narrative enquiry to explore academic experiences of international students and revealed that their language abilities were among the major problems they faced. Recently Shafaei et al. (2016) have focused on international students' attitudes towards acculturation and the effects of these attitudes on students' academic practices and found that international students showed positive commitments to the academic norms in the Malaysian context.

To sum up, most of the studies reviewed here were conducted in Western contexts and findings cannot be generalised to assume that international graduate students in Malaysia have identical problems and experiences. Additionally, studies that have examined international students' academic experiences in Malaysia have concluded that the major obstacles of these students are related to English language and meeting the requirements of the Malaysian educational context which is considered relatively new in overseas studying market. Moreover, none of these studies has focused exclusively on academic reading difficulties faced by international graduate students in Malaysian institutions of higher education.

#### **Theoretical framework**

This study is supported by the model of academic literacies (Lea & Street, 1998, 2000, 2006) and the sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). The model of academic literacies, which has been originally developed from the area of 'new literacy studies' (Baynham, 1995), is an attempt to conceptualise students' learning in higher education contexts. Study skills, academic socialisation, and academic literacies have been identified as interrelated in a complex network that may help researchers to understand university students' academic practices, such as reading and writing (Lea & Street, 1998, 2000). The model of academic literacies was considered suitable to be the theoretical framework of this study because reading tasks graduate students engage in and the academic written work they produce are both influenced by the conventions and rules of the university context, or the academic discourse, the students are in. Since this study focused on academic reading difficulties of international students, it is important to highlight how this model is related to academic reading. In fact, the academic literacy model is considered

essential for this study because academic literacy is defined as the "ability to read and write the various texts assigned in [university]" (Spack, 1997, p. 3).

The sociocultural theory of learning is also considered essential for this study for the following reasons. First, Zuengler and Miller (2006) emphasised the relevance and the importance of the sociocultural theory of learning in designing and carrying out studies in L2 contexts. Second, the university context can be considered suitable for an inquiry on graduate students' academic difficulties because it offers opportunities for using academic language (such as reading tasks) in different academic and non-academic activities (Zuengler & Miller, 2006). Third, this theory conceptualises learners as social agents in active pursuit of linguistic competence and non-linguistic outcomes (Gao, 2007). Fourth, reading skills used by graduate students in a particular university context are not only seen as individual choices made by the students themselves but are considered to be connected to the practices of particular communities they belong to. Thus, the current study makes use of the sociocultural theory of learning to understand a group of graduate students' experiences, difficulties, and strategies they use to overcome their academic reading difficulties.

## **Method**

### **Study design and sampling**

This study employed a mixed methods approach in which both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection were used. Gay and Airasian (2003) refer to this type of research as QUAN-QUAL 'which integrates simultaneous qualitative and quantitative methods with equal weight' (p. 185). With reference to the classification of types of mixed method designs by Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann and Hanson (2003), the type of the current mixed methods study is concurrent triangulation because of three reasons: (1) quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed at the same time, (2) priority was usually equal and given to both forms of data, and (3) data analysis was usually separate and integration occurred at the data interpretation stage.

The setting of this study is Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), a Malaysian public university which is one of the most popular research universities in the country. The target population included all USM graduate students from Yemen, an Arab country. Arabic is the first language and the mother tongue of all these students. All students studied English language formally for six years in their twelve years of education at primary and secondary schools in Yemen. For USM a good level of English proficiency is a prerequisite, with a TOEFL score of minimum 80 or IELTS band 6 required in almost all postgraduate programs that are open to international students (Institute of Postgraduate Studies, 2016). Some postgraduate programs may make it a prerequisite that a student should finish some intensive English language courses before enrolment in the University. However, direct English language support is not given to postgraduate students in the context of this study. The participants were undertaking graduate studies in the fields of sciences. Eighty-two students were males (89.1%) and 10 were females (10.9%).

### **Data collection**

### *Questionnaire*

The questionnaire used in this study was based on Hyland (1997) and Evans and Green (2007). The first part was used to obtain demographic data and the second part included 10 items to get information on students' perceptions of their academic reading difficulties. In the second part, the respondents were required to rate the academic reading difficulties they faced using a five-point Likert-scale, ranging from 'very easy' to 'very difficult'.

### *Focus group interviews and journaling*

Focus group interviews and journaling were used to collect qualitative data. The participants had opportunities to talk about their concerns and challenges in their own words. This helped the researchers to understand students' concerns and challenges regarding academic reading difficulties. Focus group interviews also helped the researchers to explore all possibilities regarding graduate students' academic reading and to identify important aspects of information that might not be obtained through other techniques of data collection (refer to Merriam & Simpson 2000). Furthermore, these interviews allowed the researchers to "tap into the experience of others in their own natural language, while utilising their value and belief frameworks" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 155), and provided greater depth in the participants' responses concerning academic reading difficulties and how to overcome them (see Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Six focus group interviews lasting 40 to 50 minutes were held, in which the questions focused on graduate students' academic reading difficulties and the strategies they used to overcome these difficulties. While constructing the questions for the interviews, we referred to Burke and Wyatt-Smith (1996), Hyland (1997), Leki (2003), and Evans and Green (2007). Furthermore, some questions used in the interviews were based on the items given in the questionnaire.

For journal writing, the students who agreed to participate in this research activity were asked to keep journals to record their experiences in academic reading and how they could solve their problems (refer to Hatch, 2002). Some researchers prefer to use journaling as one method of data collection because the participants can compose entries in their leisure time freely (Hatch, 2002). Furthermore, data obtained from journaling can generally provide a direct access into the experiences of the participants. This type of data are not directly processed through a researcher; they come directly from the participants. A researcher has to analyse and interpret data from journals after they are completed by the participants. This is what was followed in this study.

### *Data analysis*

SPSS was used to compile, tabulate, and analyse the quantitative data. The calculation of the frequencies and means of all items were done to gather information on students' academic reading difficulties. A frequency analysis was also conducted to examine the distribution of respondents' demographic profiles. For the analysis of qualitative data, inductive data analysis, as suggested by Patton (1990, p. 390), was implemented in which patterns, themes, and categories of analysis "emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collec-

tion and analysis". The technique that was used in the inductive analysis was content analysis: a "process that involves the simultaneous coding of raw data and construction of categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document's content" (Merriam, 1998, p. 160). Using this technique the researchers coded all qualitative data obtained from focus group interviews and journals to reveal academic reading difficulties of international students and how they overcome these difficulties.

## Results

### Academic reading difficulties

As presented in Table 1, the most difficult academic reading sub-skills for the students in this study are (1) taking brief and relevant notes, (2) using own words in note taking, (3) working out the meanings of difficult words, and (4) identifying supporting ideas/examples. With reference to the skill of taking brief notes, 42.4% of the students viewed it as difficult, 15.2% indicated that it was very difficult, and 26.1% considered this skill as neither easy nor difficult. Regarding the skill of using their own words in note-taking, 35.9% of the respondents found it difficult, 16.3% indicated that it was very difficult, and 29.4% chose 'neutral' to describe their perceptions of the difficulty of this skill. With reference to item 9 which focused on the academic reading skill of working out meaning of difficult words, 39.1% of the respondents felt that it was difficult, and only five students (5.44%) marked this skill as very difficult. However, 35.9% of the students considered working out meaning of difficult words as neither easy nor difficult. While 37% felt that the skill of identifying supporting ideas or examples was neither difficult nor easy for them, 25% viewed it as easy. However, 29.4% felt that it was difficult for them to identify supporting ideas or examples in the reading materials they had to do.

Table 1: Frequencies of aspects of difficulties in academic reading

Aspect of difficulty		Very easy		Easy		Neutral		Difficult		V. difficult	
			%								
	Identifying supporting ideas/examples		6.5	3	5	4	7.0	7	9.4		.2
	Reading carefully to understand a text		9.8	2	5.7	6	8.3			5	6.3
	Identifying key ideas		6.5	7	0.2	5	8.0	3	4.1		.1
	Understanding organisation of a text		4.4	7	0.2	3	5.9	3	4.1		.4
	Taking brief, relevant notes		3.3	2	3.0	4	6.1	9	2.4	4	5.2
	Using own words in note taking		4.4	3	4.1	7	9.4	3	5.9	5	6.3

	Reading quickly to get overall meaning		7.6	6	8.3	0	2.7	7	9.4		.2
	Reading quickly to find information		8.7	1	3.7	6	8.3	3	5		.4
	Working out meaning of difficult words		2.2	6	7.4	3	5.9	6	9.1		.4
0	Understanding specialist vocabulary		8.7	1	3.7	1	3.7	8	9.6		.4

Reading quickly to get overall meaning was viewed by most of the students as neither easy nor difficult: 32.7% indicated that this skill was neither easy nor difficult, while 28.3% viewed it as easy. On the other hand, 29.4% felt that it was difficult for them to read quickly to get the overall meaning. Reading carefully to understand the text was viewed as easy by 45.7% and as neither easy nor difficult by 28.3%. However, 15 students (16.3%) considered reading carefully to understand a text as difficult. About 37 students (40.2%) indicated that the skill of identifying key ideas was easy, while 35 of the students (38%) showed that their perception of the difficulty of this skill was neutral. With reference to the students' responses to item 4 which focused on the skill of understanding the organisation of a text, 40.2% of the students perceived it as easy and 35.9% felt that it was neither difficult nor easy. On the other hand, 14.1% considered this skill as difficult. Reading quickly to find information was considered easy by 33.7% and as neutral by 28.3%. In a similar response, 31 of the students (33.7%) felt that the skill of understanding specialist vocabulary was easy and the same number of respondents reflected that it was neither difficult nor easy. However, 18 students (19.6%) felt that it was difficult to understand specialist vocabulary.

Based on the means of the responses given in Table 2, the four top aspects of difficulties in academic reading as perceived by most of the students were taking brief and relevant notes (mean 3.53), using own words in note taking (mean 3.46), working out meaning of difficult words (mean 3.28), and identifying supporting ideas/examples (mean 2.96). The analysis of the qualitative data has also revealed that the graduate students highly estimated the importance of developing academic reading in order to improve both their academic writing and academic speaking skills. Furthermore, they showed that they faced some difficulties in developing their academic reading skills.

In reading papers and articles I think we can have the difficulty of taking too much time in reading. Maybe because we are not trained on how to use academic reading. I have been advised by friends to read more and more with the help of electronic dictionary to learn more vocabulary and practice the proper academic reading. In the beginning, I realised that I spent too much time and effort in order to understand some parts of the paper. Thereafter, I have slight improvement in reading but I still feel it really difficult (Journal 18, Yahya)

Academic reading is big problem and the time students give to reading research articles or publication is long time. In the meantime, there is variability in

styles of the authors in writing, so we can find some papers easy to understand while others are rather difficult. For me, I find it always difficult to read and digest the ideas in standard time which leading to consuming a lot of time in reading and understanding just few pages. So I think we should read fast to save time (Journal 4, Basel)

Interestingly, one student reported no substantial difficulty in reading with the help of online resources, yet admitted to consuming more time to understand the literature review as shown below.

I have no big difficulties in reading especially when it comes from online sources since Google has immediate translation. But maybe we also need hard copy dictionaries all time to translate new words. A result of this was that we take time to read for literature review (Journal 6, Abdo).

Another academic reading difficulty the students in this study reported was connecting what they read to their knowledge about a particular topic. The students revealed that they read different research articles and book chapters but they faced some difficulties in finding connections between what they were reading and their prior knowledge in their first language. This is shown in the extract given below.

When I started my study here, my knowledge about the field was not sufficient and updated because after I finished university I worked for some years. So I could not say that my past knowledge helped me in connecting with new things I was reading here. Furthermore, my first degree in Yemen was taught in the Arabic language while I have started studying here in English. Although knowledge is the same, the barrier of the language created heavy burden for me. (Journal 8, Badr).

As shown in the extract below, another graduate student expressed the same explanation that differences in languages, mother tongue and English as medium for instruction were the reasons behind the lack of full understanding of the content in his field.

Our problem was mainly from our background studies which were all in Arabic. It is so difficult to find you need to change all the names of things into English and still fully understand and connect. (Journal 21, Moneer)

#### Students' strategies for overcoming academic reading difficulties

The analysis of qualitative data revealed that most of the students reported that they joined some intensive English language courses conducted by the Language Centre in USM in order to improve their English proficiency in general. They admitted that some of those intensive courses helped them to improve basic skills in writing, reading, speaking, and listening. Although the intensive English program was designed to prepare students for academic life in the University (Intensive English Program, 2016), the students in this study pointed out that the courses they attended did not fully provide them with what they needed for their postgraduate studies.

Other strategies the graduate students in this study followed to overcome their academic reading difficulties included attending workshops organised by USM, attending colloquiums organised by their respective schools, and reading

books that included instructions on how to improve academic reading. Although some of the students revealed that not all workshops organised by USM were given specifically on reading, they acknowledged that these workshops gave them some key points to develop their academic reading skills.

They further indicated that forming friendships with senior postgraduate students helped them to overcome their academic difficulties. The following excerpts taken from focus group interviews and journals entries are given to support our findings presented in this section. As shown in these representative extracts, the students revealed some of the strategies they employed to overcome academic reading problems.

Referring to the excerpt above from one of the focus group interviews, we can understand that the students revealed some coping strategies they used to overcome their academic reading difficulties. In the excerpt given above, we underlined some coping strategies used by the students. These strategies include communicating with peers in their departments, attending some English classes in the University such as intensive English courses, and reading books on academic English.

It is significant to mention that the students in this study revealed that one of the factors that contributed to their academic reading difficulties was their educational background, in which there was no major focus on English for academic purposes. The students also added that they had not received any teaching or training on how to deal with large amounts of reading from academic texts. In other words, the students showed that the required amount of reading was beyond what they expected.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

This study has revealed that the academic reading difficulties faced by international graduate students in a Malaysian public university were taking brief and relevant notes, using their own words in note taking, working out meaning of difficult words, identifying supporting ideas/examples, and managing their time for completion of reading academic materials. Connecting what graduate students read with their previous knowledge in their fields was also found to be a major concern of these students. Most of these academic reading difficulties faced by international graduate students can be attributed to low proficiency in English, the amount of vocabulary they have, and to the slow rate of their reading. To overcome these academic reading difficulties, international graduate students in this study have reported using the following strategies:

- Enrolling in some intensive English language courses

- Participating in workshops conducted by the University

- Taking active participation in colloquiums organised by their respective schools

- Reading books on how to improve academic reading

- Seeking help from peers

Although previous studies have not examined the specific academic reading difficulties faced by international students, some of the findings reported in this study are similar to the findings of Barker et al. (1991), Brown and Holloway (2008), Kim (2011), Phakiti et al. (2013), and Sandekian et al. (2016) who have emphasised that language difficulties are considered to be important for international students. Similar to the findings of Kim (2006), this study has revealed that international graduate students are very concerned about using their English skills in note-taking. Similar to what has been reported by studies on international students in Malaysia (e.g., Kaur & Abdul Manan, 2008; Kaur & Sidhu, 2009; Yusoff, 2012; Singh et al., 2016; Mahfoodh, 2014; Pandian et al., 2014; Trahar, 2014; Shafaei et al., 2016), this study confirms that language is a major barrier to improvement and learning for international students in Malaysia. Similar to findings by Phakiti et al. (2013), this study has pointed out that international students' lack of required proficiency in English can be one of the main sources of difficulties for them because it can have a negative effect on their achievement and academic adjustment.

Similar to Hirano (2016), the academic reading difficulties reported by the participants in our study were related to the amount of reading, educational background, and language issues. Furthermore, some findings from our study agree with those of Hirano (2016) because our study showed that international students used some coping strategies to overcome academic reading difficulties. These coping strategies stem from the importance of interacting with others such as peers and lecturers in the discourse community.

Thus, the experiences of international graduate students in Malaysia can be more productive and less stressful if institutions of higher education take into account the unique academic adjustment difficulties faced by these students. There must be improved understanding of the perceived beliefs brought by international students about academic behaviours and conduct (Shafaei et al., 2016). In addition, differences in the international students' conceptualisations of learning and graduate education can be considered as deficiencies for which more academic support should be provided. Investigating the differences that international students bring to the University can inform authorities on how to best provide suitable assistance to future students. Furthermore, since international students may depend on other students, either local or international, on overcoming their academic difficulties, there is a need for programs to enrich this connectedness, through the provision of favourable conditions that may boost the engagement among international students and other students, both local and international.

### **Contribution of the study**

The findings of this study make two main contributions to knowledge in the field of adjustment and adaptation of international students, especially in the Asian region. First, a focus on academic challenges encountered by a group of international students from an Arab country in a Malaysian public university seems to be an issue that has been neglected in previous literature. Second, this study revealed some strategies that were employed by the students to cope with the academic

reading difficulties they faced in their postgraduate studies. Focusing on these strategies, institutions of higher education in Malaysia can develop remedy programs to help international students to overcome their academic reading difficulties. Consequently, institutions of higher education in Malaysia can improve their postgraduate programs to attract more international students.

### **Recommendations for future research**

This study has focused on one group of international students in one Malaysian public university. So, future studies may focus on all international students in some Malaysian public universities to find out more about their experiences. Both academic and sociocultural difficulties of international students across a number of Malaysian public universities can be issues that need immediate attention.

Since the international students in this study revealed that they encountered a range of academic reading difficulties, future researchers may need to focus on the non-language academic difficulties to complement the findings of this study. In addition, further studies can employ a qualitative approach to focus on understanding specific academic difficulties, such as academic difficulties in writing theses and research papers.

This study also shows that academic reading difficulties faced by international students can differ from one discipline to another. Taking this into account, we recommend exploratory studies to deal with specific academic difficulties that are discipline-specific. For example, comparisons of academic difficulties faced by international students in fields such as applied sciences and social sciences may yield important findings. Another suggestion is an investigation of lecturers and supervisors' perceptions of their international students' academic difficulties, comparing their perceptions with those of the students so as to provide a holistic perspective.

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## Study measures of the substantial importance of undergraduate students

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This quasi-experimental study examined the contribution of *concept-oriented reading instruction* (CORI) on fifth grade students' reading comprehension, motivation and metacognition. Participants were sixty-six fifth grade female Jordanian students who matched in gender, socioeconomic status, number of years learning English, and school attended. Students completed measures of reading comprehension test, motivation, and metacognition twice (before and after the intervention reading program). Results of pre- and post-test analyses of female students' responses to the reading test and the metacognition and motivation questionnaires showed that reading comprehension, motivation, and metacognition increased only in the CORI group. This study has revealed the feasibility of implementing CORI in EFL reading contexts.

### Introduction

Given its substantial importance to school students' learning and development, research on reading comprehension has investigated influences upon the growth of this skill (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Guthrie & Klauda, 2014; Klauda & Guthrie, 2016). Generally, it has been noticed that second language (L2) learners may struggle to develop reading skills, especially students who are economically disadvantaged and exposed to a teacher-centred approach. While these struggling learners might score low in academic achievement, simply because of their low motivation, their disengagement in the form of effort, for example, might affect their reading comprehension and, therefore, they may not acquire comprehension skills effectively (Klauda & Guthrie, 2016). In response to these problems, researchers and educators have been interested in how to help these struggling students to develop reading comprehension. One of the efforts that have been done to help these

struggling readers to develop reading comprehension is the use of reading intervention programs (Guthrie, Wigfield & VonSecker, 2000; Guthrie, 2004).

#### Studies conducted in English

speaking countries have shown that cognitive and motivation variables influence school students' reading comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2000; Guthrie & Taboada, 2004; Pressley & Harris, 2006). Unlike first language (L1) contexts, studies in non-speaking English countries, to date, are very rare, especially with respect to understanding how motivation and metacognitive variables can contribute together to the growth of reading comprehension among students in both schools and tertiary education. Additionally, studies on reading comprehension in L2 contexts have either examined the relationship between cognitive variables and reading comprehension or, alternatively, the relationship between motivation variables and reading comprehension. Another line of research in L2 contexts has focused on the effects of intervention programs on only reading comprehension (refer to Chen, Shih-Jay & Chu, 2014). It is important to mention that research on developing reading comprehension in Jordan and other Arab countries has treated reading as an isolated skill and, accordingly, has not given adequate attention to the effects of other constructs, such as metacognition or/and motivation (refer to Al-Qatawneh, 2007). Furthermore, in EFL contexts in Arab countries the use of intervention programs for developing reading comprehension lacks coherence of important constructs that can contribute to the growth of reading comprehension, such as the promotion of strategy use and development of motivation. In short, very few studies in Arab countries have used reading intervention programs to examine the effect of strategy use and motivation on reading comprehension.

Thus, the main purpose of this study is to examine to what extent reading comprehension, motivation and metacognitive variables increase under the effect of *concept-oriented reading instruction* (CORI), which is an integrated reading intervention program that has not been adequately employed in L2 and EFL contexts. In our study, CORI was implemented in Jordan, an EFL context, in order to investigate its effects on students' reading comprehension, motivation, and metacognition. Surveying previous studies in which CORI was used appear to reveal that the L1 context is the focus of CORI implementation (Swan, 2003). Therefore, CORI implementation in Jordan, to the best knowledge of the researchers, is the first study to be carried out in L2 contexts.

#### Literature review

Several studies on literacy development have been carried out to understand the development of reading comprehension of students in schools. Researchers who have focused on motivation have debated how the functions of cognitive and motivation variables interact and how each variable influences students' learning achievement (Guthrie et al., 2000; Guthrie, 2004; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Specifically, such research has so far focused on how motivation offers energising and activating ways for initiating and developing cognitive processes, which can improve students' achievement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Some of these studies have examined intrinsic motivation as a predictor of achievement in several areas,

such as reading, sports, and mathematics (Wigfield, Eccles, Schiefele, Roeser & Davis Kean, 2006). Regarding this issue, Guthrie et al. (2000) have noted that intrinsic motivation is a strong predictor of elementary school students' reading comprehension.

Educators are likely concerned about how to make readers, especially those at early stages of education, engaged in reading activities. A good learning environment that contributes to the growth of mastering reading skills is an efficient exposure to engagement processes, which involves engaged reading among school students (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). This is because engaged readers have the capability and awareness of using and regulating strategies to develop their acquisition of knowledge through reading. Using integrated instructions in reading classrooms, the use of strategies among students has demonstrated an increase in text comprehension (Pressley, 2000; Guthrie et al. 2007), extending the predictive power of this variable on comprehension (Pressley & Harris, 2006), and strong association with learning performance (Zhao & Zheng, 2014). In such a way, activating background knowledge, for example, plays a significant role in comprehension of traditional printed texts (McNeil, 2011).

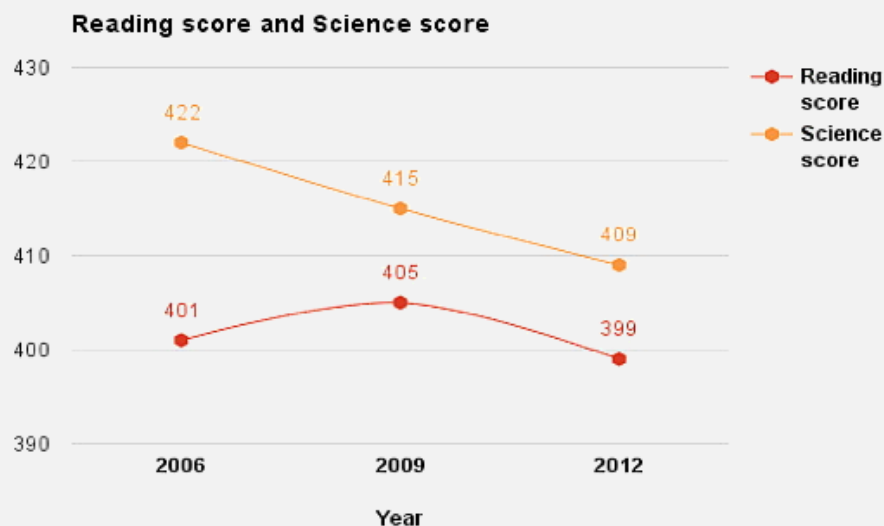
Research on the use of metacognition awareness of reading strategies (MARS) showed that L2 readers have high usage of reading strategies (Cubukcu, 2008; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2004). So, does knowing logically mean using reading strategies effectively? In this regard, in 2012 the results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicated low academic achievements in Arab countries in reading, mathematics, and science (see the following section for more details). Additionally, results from international tests have revealed recently that Arab learners as well as L2 learners had achieved low scores (refer to International English Language Testing System, undated). Driven from the above notions, large-scale assessments such as PISA have revealed contrary results to Mokhtari and Reichard (2004) who reported that students in L2 contexts are proficient in using reading strategies. Beyond examining what readers know about reading strategies, our study took a further step through examining the growth of reading strategies under CORI intervention and training students on using MARS.

Metacognition, which is a state of higher order thinking, comprises an awareness of and ability to control cognitive processes when learners are engaged in learning (Flavell, 1979). Evaluating, questioning, and planning are examples of cognitive processes that are employed by proficient readers. Self-questioning, as one of these processes used by motivated readers, is strongly linked to reading comprehension (Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield & Guthrie, 2009). Regarding this issue, Guthrie et al. (1998) pointed out that motivated readers are engaged in a process of reading strategies that operate dynamically and increase over time. Motivated readers also use and regulate strategies of searching, extracting, and critically looking up for details to develop their acquisition of information found in reading texts (Guthrie et al., 1998). To use these strategies, readers have to be strongly motivated because strategy use is highly linked to motivational attributes of desire, attention, and effort (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Bruce and Robinson (2000) experimented with a

metacognitive approach to enhance reading skills and word identification in upper primary poor readers. The results of their experiment were compatible with their expectations in which greater gains were detected in experimental subjects. Perhaps the need for teachers to focus on strategies for how students can become more efficient learners is important more than ever in countries like Jordan, in order to develop self-regulatory learning in students (Harrison & Prain, 2009).

#### **The context of at-risk readers**

Results of International Student Assessment programs in 2006-2012 show a decreasing trend in Jordanian students' achievement in L1 reading and mathematics, as shown in Figure 1 below. The functional mechanism of motivation and metacognition in supporting desired growth in effective learning in reading and mathematics can be a major factor in students' poor performance. In a recent review of English language education in Jordan, Alhabahba, Pandian, and Mahfoodh (2016) have touched upon the poor performance of English language learners in Arab countries and have argued that it can be attributed to factors related to learners such as motivation and inefficient use of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. They have also claimed that the poor performance of English language learners in Arab countries can be a result of teacher-centred approaches in which teachers focus on decoding, word for word translation, and grammar translation method as ways for delivering information. Above that, the authoritarian power practised by parents impacts in a negative way upon students' learning, resulting in poorer development of critical thinking skills (Alhabahba et al., 2016).



**Figure 1:** PISA results of Jordanian students' achievements in reading and mathematics for the years 2006-2012 (interactive plot produced by RPubs, available at [http://rpubs.com/mohd82ma/Students\\_Achievements](http://rpubs.com/mohd82ma/Students_Achievements)).

#### **School-exist results in the Arab world**

Recent trends for school students in economically disadvantaged countries have shown low performance in academic achievements (PISA, 2012). For example, media headlines and researchers' points of view in Jordan have examined the adequacy of teaching and learning practices in the Jordanian classrooms (Alzubaidi, Aldridge & Khine, 2014; Malkawi, 2014; Jordanian Teachers Syndicate, 2016). These researchers have also noted the recent unsatisfactory results of high school students in Jordan, which was clear when 29.6% of the students in academic stream passed exams in 2014 compared to 57% in 2010 (Jordan Times, 2016). Additionally, Alzubaidi et al. (2014) have recently pointed out that the general environment of teaching and learning in L2 contexts, and especially in Jordan, is that students are exposed to only mere explanations of English language structures and meanings of words without proper and effective instruction. Such a claim is not surprising, for example the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2008) projected a technological initiative in schools named Discovery Schools to promote and develop the learning and teaching environment in Jordanian schools. In this project, e-content in mathematics, English, and other subjects was taught using technology, and the result that seems to be interesting is that "the general nature of practice is still teacher-centred in the Discovery Schools project" (p. 25).

It should be noted that the teaching of reading using different texts (historical, scientific and other types of texts) is demanding and it requires teachers to be acquainted with comprehensive instructional practices coupled with creativity to deliver meaningful learning (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006). Taking these problems into concern, our research was carried out to examine the effectiveness of CORI on reading comprehension, motivation, and metacognition awareness.

### **The study**

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of concept-oriented reading instruction on EFL fifth grade students' reading comprehension in Jordanian schools?
2. What is the effect of concept-oriented reading instruction on EFL fifth grade students' reading motivation?
3. What is the effect of concept-oriented reading instruction on EFL fifth grade students' metacognition awareness of reading strategies?

### **Concept-oriented reading instruction**

Developed by John Guthrie and Lois Bennett in 1993 (Guthrie et al., 2004), CORI is a comprehensive framework that comprises a set of instructional practices that aims to stimulate students' interests and motivation to read. CORI is also known as an instructional reading intervention program that combines science instruction, strategy instruction, a set of motivational practises developed to advance school students' comprehension, motivation (i.e. intrinsic), and strategy learning and use (Guthrie, 2004).

There are four stages in CORI. In the first stage, the main theme is promoted and engagement is driven within the topic discussed. This is followed by the second stage in which multiple sources are used to gather necessary information corresponding to the theme promoted. In the third stage, instructions are delivered,

and encouragement to use them among students is performed. In the fourth one, tasks and assignments are requested to assess learning outcomes. Strategy instructions are offered to inherit the inputs gained from reading texts with support and interaction of comprehension strategies that are beyond strategy training (e.g. extensive reading, vocabulary acquisitions, and development). In the development of CORI stages, learners should be engaged in activities and content discussions that require purposeful use of strategies. Such strategies can include activating background knowledge, synthesising information, and graphical representation(s) of information acquired. Explicit instruction is delivered to develop these strategies where students are engaged in learning about new topics or ideas from texts. Teachers are required to support students learning processes through modelling, scaffolding, and extensive practices (refer to Guthrie et al., 2007).

An important characteristic of CORI is curricular coherence which is operationalised by the continuous supply of content materials that support students' engagement by encouraging them to establish links across texts and other subjects (Guthrie et al., 2000). Motivation in CORI is also addressed because CORI specifies five motivational constructs that signify goals and aims for the instructional intervention. These five motivational constructs which are mastery goals, self-efficacy, perceived autonomy, collaboration, and intrinsic motivation were drawn from social cognitive theory (Schunk, 2003), self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and goal-theory (Pintrich, 2000) (more details can be found in Guthrie et al., 2007). Relevance, choice, and collaboration, for example, as instructional practices driven from earlier motivational constructs are used to infuse students engagement and motivation.

### **Method**

The design of the study is quasi-experimental using control and experimental groups to estimate the effect of CORI on the three variables: reading comprehension, motivation, and metacognition. This design was found to be appropriate for this study because it has been recommended that in a setting where students cannot be randomly assigned, it is better to employ a quasi-experimental design which can serve as an alternative choice to randomly assigned groups designs (Fife-Schaw, 2006). Although full control in a quasi-experimental design is difficult, this design can help researchers to reach reasonable conclusions (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2013). In this study, the experimental group received teaching of reading using CORI and in the control group the traditional teaching method was used.

### **Participants and the context**

The participants were sixty-six fifth-grade female students from six classrooms in one southern district area in Jordan, called Alshoubak. To employ CORI, only female students were selected for two reasons. First, we wanted to eliminate the issue of the gender differences in learning because it has been pointed out that girls may possess more linguistic skills than boys (Eriksson et al., 2012). Second, in the schools chosen for this study, female students outnumbered male students. It is important to mention that all students came from the same cultural background, number of years learning English (since first grade), almost the same age (around 11

years old), and under the same conditions of classrooms (traditional reading teaching practices). Further, the girls were from same socio-economic status. The girls' mothers are housewives and their fathers' occupations are primarily governmental ones with salaries that range between 350 and 420 Jordanian Dinars.

Another issue that should be justified in this study is the selection of the fifth grade stage to be the target for employing CORI. The fifth grade stage was selected for several reasons. First, research on the intervention programs conducted on early stages of schooling revealed high returns (i.e. early childhood) compared to primary or secondary stages (Heckman et al., 2004). Second, the fifth grade stage is an early stage in Jordanian schools, and it has been argued that students in early stages in schools show effective achievements in some important domains, such as the cognitive domain (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). Third, the students in our sample (the fifth grade students) were at appropriate ages to be exposed to CORI. Fourth, the students in our sample had similar number of years studying English as a foreign language. Fifth, the students in earlier stages, such as the fifth grade in this study, rely on textbooks without supplementary reading texts. For these reasons we chose the fifth grade stage for the employment of CORI.

Regarding the selection of Alshoubak, a district in Jordan, to be the region to employ CORI, there are some reasons. First, the students in this district have limited access to sufficient learning materials. Second, the teachers in this region have limited access to professional development programs that are essential for the development of teachers' skills. Third, the education department in this district welcomes educational research and encourages researchers who are interested in research that aims to develop learning and instruction in the region.

The six schools that agreed to take part in the study were sent invitations enclosed with a short description of the reading intervention program. Three schools were nominated as experimental schools by the director of the supervision department because of their interest in and support for improving students' learning and teachers' professional development. Teachers who participated in CORI implementation had similar years of teaching experience. Furthermore, all teachers had bachelor's degrees in English Language Teaching (ELT) and were from the same geographical site where this research was conducted.

All teachers in the experimental schools received invitations to participate in a mini CORI training sessions for 4 weeks, and all of them agreed to participate (Guthrie et al., 2007). In addition, the teachers sat for training workshops using CORI as their teaching framework. All the teachers participated in the experiment had approximately the same teaching experience. We built mutual trust with the teachers and had their agreement regarding the adoption of CORI as the only reference framework for teaching. We also agreed with the teachers to make regular visits (not in the classrooms) to discuss CORI implementation. To ensure that teaching style was not an independent variable, the teachers were trained on the use of CORI and were helped to prepare lesson plans.

Regarding the context of the study, it is important to highlight what constitutes traditional reading method in Jordan, compared with other regions of the

world. In most cases, schools in Jordan receive limited funding from the government and, therefore, conducting up-to-date professional development is unlikely to occur (Alhabahba et al., 2016). Thus, teachers are left by their own to figure out and choose teaching styles that they think suitable for their students. Thus, with the authoritarian power that exists in the context, teachers focus on rote learning and memorisation that do not support student-centred and task-based learning approaches.

### **Data collection**

To collect data, some measures were used before and after the implementation of CORI. These measures are Reading Comprehension Test (RCT), Metacognition Awareness of Reading Strategies (MARS) with three levels, and intrinsic motivation with three levels. A panel of five PhD holders reviewed these measures and assessed their translated versions in order to check their appropriateness for school female students. Issues like format (including pictures to visually represent few questions) and time needed to answer the tools items were raised by the panel. Subsequently, the researchers made some modifications (e.g., time needed to answer RCT items) in response to these issues raised by the panel.

The first measure, RCT, was developed by the researchers and contained 26 questions which were divided equally into inferential, literal, and evaluative items. To construct RCT, the researchers followed the recommendations of Alderson, Clapham and Wall (1995) and Wray and Janan (2013). One of these recommendations is that texts used in RCT should consider word difficulty and familiarity levels and appropriateness of the text to the test takers and their cultural background. The researchers employed developed RCT to examine students' reading comprehension growth during the implementation of CORI. The students completed RCT before CORI and after the completion of CORI training.

MARS is the second measure, adopted from Mokhtari and Reichard (2004). When this measure was tested and used in L2 contexts, including Arab contexts, it achieved good reliability and validity. The translation method used for this tool was back-translation method as recommended by Brislin (1986). MARS consisted of three levels/sub-scales: support strategies with six items, cognitive strategies with nine items, and metacognitive with twelve items. We used this model to measure students' responses using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (I never or almost never use this strategy) to 5 (I always or almost always use this strategy).

The third measure was an intrinsic motivation scale with three levels (Vallerand et al., 1992): stimulation, accomplishment, and knowledge, each with three items. Similar to MARS, modification and translation of this measure was carried out to fit the purpose of our study. For example, the items 'to show myself that I am a good citizen because I can speak a second language' was modified to 'to show myself that I am a good student because I can read'. Students responded on Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Students completed answers to this instrument before and at the conclusion of the project.

The three measures used in this study were examined for reliability and validity. The construct validity of RCT was examined by item-analysis difficulty

(Lord, 1952). The values ranged from 0.60-0.80 suggesting a good difficulty level. For MARS, Cronbach's alpha for support achieved .92, metacognitive .93 and cognitive strategies .89. Intrinsic motivation knowledge, accomplishment, and stimulation achieved Cronbach's alpha .82, .80 and .79 respectively.

### **Implementation of CORI**

The 50-minute daily reading intervention program, implemented in the beginning of the second semester 2014 (from February to the end of May), was the main reading program for the total of 16 weeks. Specifically, five instructional phases were implemented in CORI classrooms. The overall study of the effectiveness of the CORI intervention program for developing comprehension, intrinsic motivation levels, and MASR levels was a pre-post control group design. The following measures were given before and immediately after the 16-week intervention to school female students in the CORI and control groups. Before and after the course of CORI, tools were pre- and post-tested.

In the first phase, emphasis was placed on content in the conceptual theme for reading instruction, to offer female school students an involving and meaningful learning environment. This included learning about animals and their living conditions in their context. For example, when the teachers taught students about the donkey, they taught about feeding, communication, and adaption to habitat. Second, the teachers provided hands-on activities to motivate female students' situational interest, which included field observation of living animals and plants, and experiments on seed planting (refer to Appendix). The third phase included using information sources and interesting texts in relation to the conceptual theme (e.g., defined conceptual theme in relation to the topic taught by teachers). For example, donkey was given as an example of a living animal, while *Grandma and the brave donkey* was the text. Fourth, the teachers provided some interesting texts and exercises to the students. The fifth phase included teaching a set of strategies that are considered effective in developing reading comprehension. Such strategies included activating background knowledge, self-questioning, looking up information, and forming graphically (refer to Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Guthrie, 2004; Guthrie & Taboada, 2004; Guthrie et al., 2007). It is noteworthy to mention that supplementary texts were provided and ranged from easy to difficult. These reading texts were selected based on some criteria, which included, amongst all, suitability of the texts to the cultural and learning values in relation to the context. The teacher participants and the director of supervision Department of Education in the context of the study were also consulted during the selection of the reading texts. The Appendix presents examples of supplementary texts, individual's set, peers' set, and group's set.

### **Data analysis**

The overall aim of using a quantitative approach in this study is to gather accessible data in an easy manner because this is the first time for projecting CORI in this L2 context. In addition to this, understanding the functionality of CORI in L2 context would be easier through using quantitative approach. Students' responses were keyed in SPSS v20 and the variables were created for the purpose of under-

standing the effect of using CORI on reading comprehension, intrinsic motivation levels separately (i.e. knowledge, stimulation, and accomplishment), and metacognition levels (i.e. support, metacognitive, and cognitive strategies). To analyse the data, a series of multiple analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were run. ANCOVA helps in understanding the potential influence of covariates on the dependent variable and allows for reducing within-error group variance, which in turns allows for more accurate assessment of the influence of the independent variable (Field, 2009). The following sub-sections present the analysis of the three measures used in this study, RCT, intrinsic motivation and MARS.

#### Reading comprehension

Scores from RCT of the fifth grade female students were created from both the pre-RCT and post-RCT assessment. As mentioned earlier, the students' responses to the RCT items were scored on a four point scale, as recommended for early reading assessment (Rathvon, 2004). The standardised scale from this test was further carried out for further analysis.

#### MARS questionnaire scores

Scores from each subscale were created. For the items of each level of MARS (support, metacognitive and cognitive strategies), the sum of scores was used in the statistical analysis. The rationale behind carrying out this method is to understand the effect size on each dimension of MARS after CORI completion, while controlling pre-tests.

#### Intrinsic motivation questionnaire scores

Scores from each subscale were created. That is, the sum of scores for each subscale in the intrinsic motivation tool was treated and created separately for the exact rationale explained above in the analysis of MARS.

To address this question, which focuses on the effect of CORI on each level of MARS, a series of ANCOVA analyses were carried out. The interaction effect of treatment by covariates in the post-support, cognitive and metacognitive strategies was non-significant at  $F(1,64) = 0.078, p = .178$ ,  $F(1,64) = 1.855, p = .782$ , and  $F(1,64) = 0.102, p = .751$  respectively. These results indicate that the relationship between the pre-MARS levels and the post-MARS levels did not differ significantly as a function of the CORI treatment. Therefore, these results indicate that pre-MARS levels are feasible to be used as covariates in further analysis. The ANCOVA analysis presented here is for each level of MARS: support strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies respectively.

The first ANCOVA analysis was run to understand the effect of CORI on students' support strategies in the experimental group. As shown in Table 5, students in the CORI group ( $M = 3.355$ ) outperformed the students in the control group ( $M = 3.098$ ) ( $F = 10.516, df = 1,63, p = .002, \eta^2 = 0.143$ ). Additionally, pre-support strategies was significantly related to post-support strategies ( $F = .423, df = 1,63, p = .043, \eta^2 = 0.064$ ). The effect size was *Cohen's d* = 0.72, which indicated that the treatment group scored 0.719 standard deviation which is higher than their counterparts in the control group. This indicate that there was a significant and medium to large effect of the treatment.

### Discussion

In this study, CORI, which is an instructional intervention reading program, was employed to investigate its effects on reading comprehension, metacognition of reading strategies, and motivation among Jordanian fifth grade female students. A quasi-experimental design was carried out in this study because classes are readily formed by the school administration in Jordan. The contribution of our study emerges from the scant work on motivational and cognitive variables and reading comprehension under one instructional intervention program. Further, to the best knowledge of the researchers, this is the first CORI experiment in L2 contexts aimed at examining Arab Jordanian female fifth grade students' reading comprehension, intrinsic motivation, and metacognition strategies.

The results of this study have revealed that after the implementation of CORI there was a considerable increase in students' reading comprehension, intrinsic motivation (i.e. knowledge, accomplishment and stimulation), and metacognition awareness of reading strategies (i.e. support, cognitive and metacognitive). During CORI implementation, female students showed interest in the 'new teaching style proposed by their teacher'. This generated interest sprung from 'we love the stories we had in our class', for example. It is concluded from the former notions that EFL students felt the significant shift from the traditional teaching approach currently practised to more communicative, yet comprehensive instructional practices. Shifting from the traditional reading teaching approaches to CORI has touched deeply the interrelations between students, teachers, and parents through the set of instructional practices that required them to 'communicate with others', for example, when they were requested to talk, write, or discuss something they liked and wanted to learn more about (Guthrie, 2004).

Similar to the findings of Guthrie (2004) and Guthrie et al. (2007), our study has clearly indicated that CORI influences female students' reading, intrinsic motivation, and metacognition awareness of reading strategies. These findings can be of importance to educators in Jordan because they show that the often-seen decline in school students' motivation, strategy use, and reading comprehension can be reversed with effective reading intervention programs that are designed to develop students learning. The findings of this study have confirmed that intrinsic motivation is a significant variable in the development of reading (Wigfield et al., 2004). Thus, EFL contexts in respect to curricula and classroom instructions may wish to consider some more emphasis on intrinsic motivation as an indicator for better school students' achievement and comprehension. On the basis of the theoretical principles of CORI, support for intrinsic motivation was presented in the form of instructional practices that aimed to develop, practically, the constructs examined among the school students. Although the experience we had during training teachers on CORI was 'interestingly uneasy', the practicality of CORI instructional practices made abstract concepts, such as metacognition, feasible to be taught to EFL students. In this sense, in-service teachers were exposed to much theoretical learning during post-secondary education which would not help much in tackling practical reading classroom problems. The irony found in EFL classrooms generally and

specifically, reading classrooms, is that teachers are required to teach subject matters in a communicative approach which connects students to real life situations and individuals around them (e.g., parents or peers) employing knowledge acquired (i.e. their theoretical knowledge of subject matter). Thus, without proper education that tackles classrooms problems, i.e. the practical side, and onsite professional development workshops, educational objectives and desired outcomes are hard to achieve. This claim is evident in a USAID project in Jordan (USAID, 2008) in which teachers discern a change of teaching and learning paradigm developing in their schools.

### Conclusions

The important findings of this study add to the body of literature of L2 contexts at large and to the Arab world in particular because the findings have clearly shown the feasibility of the implementation of CORI in EFL contexts. In the current study, CORI female teachers sensed the feasibility of connecting their students to motivation and strategy use to promote reading comprehension through an engagement process, such as hands-on activities that are linked to interesting texts (Wigfield et al., 2004) which made metacognition a concept, to them, possible to be taught. Although the collective instructional practices used in CORI made predicting which instructional practice contributed more to the growth of comprehension, intrinsic motivation, or metacognition unclear, it seems that isolating these instructional practices may not present a clearer picture of their significance. Yet, the attempt made here, in the context of the current study, was to carry out CORI as a whole which led us to believe that dealing with one problematic issue (e.g., motivation) in isolation is not recommended, if not linked to other variables (e.g., strategy use and motivation). This viewpoint concurs with Wigfield et al. (2004) who have shown that classrooms are complex in nature and requires a 'variety of instructional supports' that helps school learners' motivation growth.

This study has some limitations originating from the relatively small sample size, the geographical site, and the design of the study. As the focus of this research was on examining the effects of CORI on motivation, metacognition awareness of reading strategies, and reading comprehension, future studies may employ CORI to address its effect on other variables such as students' self-efficacy. As this study employed CORI using a quasi-experimental research design, future research can examine the effects of CORI using longitudinal research designs. Conducting longitudinal research can enable a clearer picture of causality relationships in understanding the growth of reading comprehension in relation to motivation, metacognition, and other variables. Considering larger sample size, different geographical sites, and other variables such as parental involvement and teachers evaluation could also help in understanding the effects of CORI on students' motivation and strategy use.

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## Development of achievement motivation in the Austrian schools

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Almost half of all gifted students do not achieve according to their exceptional potential. Though significant research has investigated identifying characteristics of underachieving gifted students, current research is yet to fully employ the established theoretical knowledge to determine practical strategies for the reversal and remediation of underachievement in gifted students. This study utilised a specifically designed *Creative Writing Program* and adopted a part-time withdrawal strategy to explore the impact of particular teaching strategies on reversing the underachievement of two gifted students. Through the two case studies, qualitative data were gathered from multiple sources and perspectives. These data were analysed using open-coding methods. The *Creative Writing Program* was found to impact the students' negative feelings, underachieving behaviours and social awareness. Furthermore, a number of teaching strategies were identified as being successful for facilitating the achievement of potential in underachieving gifted students: one-to-one teaching, positive teacher identification, and differentiation.

### Introduction

Gifted children are national and global resources who have the potential to enrich us in multifaceted ways. It is in our own self-interest to therefore foster their talents so that they might enhance the cultural, material and economic well-being of civilisation. (Rafidi, 2008, p. 64)

It seems paradoxical that gifted students could possibly underachieve. As Siegle (2012) explained: "Underachievement is among the most frustrating and bewildering education issues parents and educators face" (p. 1). However, the phenomenon of the underachieving gifted student exists in many schools. To address this issue, the study reported in this article aimed to investigate whether a part-time withdrawal intervention program could meet the learning needs of underachieving

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gifted students and potentially reverse their underachievement. The second aim of this study was to identify successful teaching strategies that facilitated the achievement potential in two underachieving gifted students through the implementation of a specifically designed part-time withdrawal program, the Creative Writing Program.

Hollingworth's pioneering longitudinal study (1942) into giftedness identified that many highly gifted students were not always permitted "full use of their abilities in school" for "originat[ing] new thoughts, new inventions, new patterns ... and solving problems", but rather "pass[ed] unrecognised" through schools, with their potential unrealised (Hollingworth, 1942, ch. 22). The inquiry of the Australian Senate Select Committee for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children claimed that between 38 to 75% of gifted students underachieve, and between 15 and 40% drop out of school before completing Year 12 studies (2001, p. 14). More recently, Landis and Reschly (2013) have reported on the alarming and ongoing nature of underachieving gifted students disengagement in schools and consequential dropout rates. Thus, there is ample research (Davis, Rimm & Siegle, 2011; Hoover Schultz, 2005; Weiss, 1972) to support the assertion that within the educational context, a significant proportion of those identified as gifted do not achieve according to their potential: they underachieve. In the words of Ritchotte, Matthews and Flowers (2014), "Gifted underachievement represents a frustrating loss of potential for society" (p. 183).

Although research has been conducted into investigating effective intervention programs to remediate underachievement in gifted students, many studies have reported limited success (Hoover Schultz, 2005; Reis & McCoach, 2000). The aforementioned Australian statistics regarding underachieving gifted students indicate the urgent need for research studies to trial potential intervention programs, comprised of practical teaching strategies, to find successful ways of combating the underachievement of gifted students in Australian high schools. In fact, Siegle (2012) identified that the experience of gifted students at high school can be crucial to their future success: "What we do know is that if nothing is done, many underachievers will not catch up after they leave high school" (p. 4).

The study documented in this article trialled an intervention strategy: a part-time withdrawal program, in which two students were guided through a specifically designed series of creative writing tasks. The study focused on creative writing, as the data collected on the selected gifted student-participants identified this as an area in which they were underachieving.

### **Background: Literature review**

Gifted students present some of the greatest challenges, and possibly some of the most memorable experiences, for teachers. To teach gifted students effectively, teachers are reminded to consider the experiences of gifted students themselves including how they are labelled, how they develop their identity and how they experience schooling (Coleman, Micko & Cross, 2016). Despite the increased number of studies over the past few decades that have researched gifted students and how to teach them, a significant proportion of gifted students are often overlooked: un-

derachieving gifted students. Compounding the issue, the paradoxical terms used to describe such students, "gifted" and "underachiever", can be quite contentious, laden with a variety of meanings.

Whitmore's (1980) seminal work, *Giftedness, conflict and underachievement*, challenged the lack of attention gifted students had received in education research, causing a resurgence of interest in the 1980s and 1990s. This led to some of the first researched strategies into remediating underachievement. For example, a report by Richert, Alvino and McDonnell (1982) acknowledged the lack of identification procedures in place for effectively recognising underachieving gifted students. In more recent years, Peters and Engerrand (2016) noted the under-representation of students from low income families and some cultural groups to be a "major barrier to great equity in the identification of students for gifted and talented programs" (p. 1). Betts and Neihart (1988) found that gifted underachievers are individuals with distinctive behaviours, feelings and learning needs (p. 252), and thus any intervention strategy must first consider the unique underachievement of the individual. Other authors have identified that, typically, underachieving gifted students seem to demonstrate a low self-concept or self-image (Fine & Pitts, 1980; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Whitmore, 1980). Since the 1980s and 1990s more researchers and educators have reported on the cause of underachievement in gifted students and issues that need to be considered to effectively remediate underachievement. For example, Siegle (2012) reported that, to reverse the cycle of underachievement, a number of factors need to be present in gifted students including a belief that they can perform well and succeed, an ability to set realistic goals and a perception that their work is meaningful.

However, to understand the notion of an underachieving gifted student, it is first necessary to acknowledge the history of research, dating back to the 1920s, on defining "giftedness". Since the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale was applied as a selection criterion for "giftedness", as reported in the Terman studies (1925), other definitions or markers of giftedness have emerged in research, such as Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (Ramos-Ford & Gardner, 1991). He asserted that there were at least seven intelligences and each individual has strength in at least one of these fields (pp. 55, 63). The underlying assumption of Gardner's model is that everyone is gifted. Even so, while every person may have gifts, typically the research in this field challenges Gardner's assertion (Colangelo & Davis, 1991, p. 4; Gagny, 1993; Senate Select Committee, 2001, pp. 6, 21-22).

The research typically defines giftedness as high potential in one or more domains (Davis, et al., 2011, p. 287; Gagny, 1993; Lassig, 2009; Senate Select Committee, 2001). The equating of giftedness with potential is a particularly useful definition in the context of this study, as it allows scope for the possibility of underachievement amongst gifted students. Gagny's (1993) differentiated model of giftedness and talent hinges upon the premise that giftedness is associated with potential. Furthermore, this model was cited in the inquiry of the Australian Senate Select Committee for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children (2001, pp. 7,

20), as it "recognise[d] the gifted student who may be underachieving... or prevented from realising his or her potential".

Although no universal definition exists for underachievement in association with giftedness, it is generally recognised as a "discrepancy between a measure of potential and actual productivity" (Davis, et al., 2011, p. 288) or "a failure to demonstrate academic performance commensurate with potential" (Landis & Reschly, 2013, p. 222). Underachievement in gifted students is fundamentally identified as an incongruity between a student's potential to achieve and the student's actual performance (Baum, Renzulli, & Hebert, 1995; Davis, et al., 2011; Dowdall & Colangelo, 1982; Gallagher, 1991; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Rimm, 1995; Senate Select Committee, 2001; Whitmore, 1980). Furthermore, Gagny's model (2007) identified the possibility for underachievement through his representation of giftedness and demonstrated performance along a continuum. Progress along this continuum is impacted by three main factors: environmental factors, intrapersonal factors and chance (2007, p. 95). This model, thus, demonstrates that those identified as gifted may not realise their ability in demonstrated performance if the aforementioned catalysts impede their progress. Gagny's assertion is that one's social and familial context, the provision of education, intrinsic motivations, temperament and well-being all impact fulfillment of potential. Therefore, underachievement can be understood as a failure to convert exceptional potential ("giftedness") into exceptional demonstrated performance ("talent"), as internal and external factors impact this transformation process. Gagny's definition of underachievement as unfulfilled potential has shaped the criteria for students' participation in this study.

Although there is now a wealth of research into identification, definitions and profiling of underachieving gifted students, fewer studies have reported on effective practical strategies and programs for the remediation or reversal of underachievement (Coleman, et al., 2016; Gallagher, 1991, p. 16; McCoach & Siegle, 2003, p. 415; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 165; Ritchotte, et al., 2014). There appears to be no single intervention strategy for reversing underachievement in gifted students that has met with significant documented success, perhaps due to the diversity within the population of underachieving gifted students. However, Siegle's (2012) work on recognising, understanding and reversing underachievement put forward strategies to address issues of perfectionism in gifted students, as well as how to increase their confidence to learn, while Landis and Reschly (2013) have suggested measures for identifying lack of engagement as a factor in underachievement. Reis and McCoach's (2000) seminal work *The underachievement of gifted students: What do we know and where do we go?*, provides a comprehensive summary and evaluation of the research into the area of underachievement. Importantly, these researchers have made suggestions for further research into intervention programs, and teaching strategies that are likely to reverse underachievement in students who have been identified as being gifted. In recent years, student engagement has been used as a lens through which the underachievement of gifted students has been examined (Landis & Reschly, 2013). Addi-

tionally, the experiences of gifted students in schools have also been examined (Coleman, et al., 2016).

Considering that underachieving gifted students comprise such a significant proportion of the gifted student population (Davis, et al., 2011; Hoover Schultz, 2005; Senate Select Committee, 2001, p. 14; Weiss, 1972), with some statistics suggesting up to half of the gifted student population (Australian Senate Select Committee, 2001), there is an pressing need for research into this area. It is necessary to identify effective and practical strategies that can facilitate the achievement of potential in underachieving gifted students in school-based contexts and thus reverse underachievement in gifted students (Siegle, 2012).

Modification of the educational environment may meet with success in reversing underachievement in gifted students (Fine & Pitts, 1980, p. 53; Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 165; 2005; Whitmore, 1980, p. 398), a notion Gagny has identified as a catalyst for achievement in his aforementioned model (1993, 2007). VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh asserted that without appropriate modification or differentiation, gifted students will "regress" in their performance or underachieve (2005, p. 212). Although differentiation is widely acknowledged as necessary in providing opportunities for students to learn according to their ability, differentiation is often poorly implemented for gifted students (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2005). Maker's (1982) model contended that for curriculum differentiation to be effective for gifted students, modifications should be considered across the following four domains: learning environment, content, process and product. Additionally, Maker's model identified the following differentiation tools as effective for gifted students to maximise both their engagement and learning: learner-orientated activities; encouragement of autonomy; freedom of choice; discovery and inquiry approaches; real life problems, audiences and evaluations; and, instructional methods that stress use of rather than acquisition of information.

Methodologically, Coleman, Guo and Simms Dabbs (2007) have documented that there is a trend towards more qualitative research methods in recent studies that have sought to investigate the phenomenon of underachievement in gifted students. Though not an exhaustive list, such qualitative approaches include the case studies of Bishop (2000) and Hettinger and Knapp (2001) involving data collection consisting of researcher observations, interviews and analysis of school documents. This is a significant methodological trend as previous research findings have consistently emphasised that underachieving gifted students are a diverse group and require an individualised approach to investigating intervention strategies (Reis & Renzulli, 2009, p. 233; Senate Select Committee, 2001, p. 11). Moreover, Coleman, Micko and Cross (2016) have suggested the necessity for capturing the perspective and voice of the underachieving gifted student in order to grasp the nature of gifted underachievement pertaining to the individual.

### **Research design**

This research study was based on a qualitative design, incorporating an in-depth case study approach, in which two male Year 7 students at a New South Wales high school, participated in a specifically designed Creative Writing Program.

The qualitative nature of this study drew on the perspectives and opinions of the various participants by "asking broad, general questions" to determine the answers to the research questions (Creswell, 2005, p. 39). The case study approach enabled "the collection of very extensive data to produce understanding of the entity being studied" (Burns, 2000, p. 460). The Creative Writing Program, designed purposely for this study, sought to facilitate learning as student-participants were guided through a series of narrative-based creative writing tasks. By its very nature, the Creative Writing Program was flexible enough to accommodate the prior knowledge, learning needs, interests and learning pace of the student-participants. In order to be involved in this study, both participants were identified as "gifted" students. Additionally, there was an observable discrepancy between the student-participants "gifted" potential and their demonstrated performance, particularly in the area of creative writing.

### **Research purpose**

The purpose of the research study reported in this article was to trial a part time withdrawal intervention program, the Creative Writing Program, with underachieving gifted students and to determine which, if any, teaching strategies were successful in facilitating the students' achievement of potential. This intervention program was informed by the aforementioned theoretical research into underachieving gifted students and was comprised of practical and differentiated teaching strategies to reverse underachievements.

The following two research questions, which reflect the purpose of the project, were used to guide the study:

What is the impact of a specifically designed part time withdrawal program (the Creative Writing Program) on an underachieving gifted student?

What teaching strategies are successful in facilitating the achievement of potential in an underachieving gifted student?

### **Participant selection**

The process of selecting participants for the study was guided by the aforementioned definitions of giftedness (Davis, et al., 2011; Gagny, 1993, 2007; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Whitmore, 1980) and underachievement (Davis, et al., 2011; Montgomery, 2009; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Whitmore, 1980). In order to be eligible for participation in this study, the gifted student must have been identified as underachieving according to Reis and McCoach's (2000) definition: underachievement is a "discrepancy between expected achievement... and actual achievement" that "persist[s] over an extended period of time" (p. 157), and Betts and Neihart's (1988) 'Profiles of the gifted and talented'. The two students who fulfilled the criteria, referred to from here using the pseudonyms Nathaniel and Luke, were also identified to be underachieving in the area of creative writing. It was coincidental that both students were male. Selection of these students was not based on an intention to compare them or consider the relationship between gender and underachievement. Rather, two case studies permitted a richer exploration of the impact of the Creative Writing Program on two different underachieving gifted students.

### **The participants**

The participants in this study were two male Year 7 students. Nathaniel was an 11 year-old gifted student in Year 7. Psychometric testing had shown strong evidence of Nathaniel's giftedness, as his composite score ranked him in the 99.91st percentile with a "Standard Age Score" of 150. His results in school-based standardised testing and evidence from the teacher-participants further corroborated this, with the school administered ACER Online Placement Instrument (OPI) placing him in the 100th percentile. However, Nathaniel also exhibited underachievement, especially in the area of creative writing. His performance during in-class creative writing tasks was not consistent with his exceptional standardised test results, as attested to by Nathaniel's teachers. Thus, Nathaniel was identified as an underachieving gifted student. Nathaniel's participation in the Creative Writing Program involved eight 50-minute sessions, over a period of seven weeks. Throughout the Program, Nathaniel was guided through a series of creative writing tasks, towards eventual completion of his own short story.

Luke was a 13 year-old boy in Year 7. He had not been formally psychometrically tested. However, Luke's results from his school-based standardised tests and evidence from the teachers-participants involved in this study indicated that Luke was gifted. The ACER Online Placement Instrument (OPI) placed him in the 92nd percentile. Evidence collected through interviews with Luke's teachers and his family members, in addition to school documents and samples of his work, suggested that Luke's potential was inconsistently demonstrated, especially in relation to his school tasks. Luke's participation in the *Creative Writing Program* involved six 50-minute sessions, over a period of seven weeks. Luke was guided through a series of creative writing tasks, towards the eventual completion of his own short story.

### **The Creative Writing Program**

The Creative Writing Program was planned as a one-to-one part-time withdrawal program. Although nine lessons in total were planned, Nathaniel attended eight lessons, and Luke attended six lessons. Their absences were due to sickness or other unavoidable absences.

The content of the Creative Writing Program was informed by the Social Model of Writing (Harris, McKenzie, Fitzsimmons, & Turbill, 2003), which encouraged students to write as readers, and read as writers. Each lesson covered a key element of narrative, such as characterisation, setting and plot development. Based on teacher and researcher observations, and interactions with Nathaniel and Luke, the Program was differentiated in its delivery in order to be flexible to the interests, prior knowledge, learning needs and learning paces of the individual student-participants.

The Program incorporated the following pedagogical approaches, as previous research determined these strategies as being successful in remediating underachievement in gifted students:

- small student-teacher ratio (Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 164);

- positive student-teacher relationship (Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 165; Rimm, 1995; Whitmore, 1980, p. 205);
- less conventional types of teaching and learning (Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 164);
- a student-centred environment where the teacher is a "facilitator" (Rowley, 2008, p. 36);
- choice of what to learn and how to learn (Fine & Pitts, 1980, p. 53; Maker, 1982; Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 165; Rowley, 2008, p. 36; Whitmore, 1980, p. 398);
- a holistic approach including family, school and student (Fine & Pitts, 1980, p. 54; Rimm, 1995);
- challenging work engaging higher order thinking skills (Rafidi, 2008); and
- opportunities for self-efficacy or self-regulation (Maker, 1982; Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 166).

#### **Data gathering and analysis processes**

In order to investigate the impact of the Creative Writing Program on the underachieving gifted student-participants, data were collected from a range of sources and perspectives before, during and after the implementation of the Creative Writing Program. The data gathered included: semi-structured interviews with teachers, student-participants and parents; field notes and observational data; qualitatively evaluated pre- and post-tests; work samples, school documents and academic records.

These data were rigorously analysed using grounded theory principles and an open coding approach to discover recurring themes. The analysis of each set of data informed further analyses of subsequent data sets in order to "build categories systematically from incident to incident and from incident to category" (Creswell, 2005, p. 396). Being guided by Glaser's emergent design practice of grounded theory (Glaser, 1992), emerging themes were identified as data were systematically analysed.

The data gathering and data analysis processes overlapped. The first phase of data analysis incorporated a process of line-by-line open coding, in order to remain "close to the data" at all times (Creswell, 2005, p. 234). At this stage, *in vivo* codes were used (the exact word and phrases of the participant) to "preserve participants' meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55). For example, Nathaniel's preliminary interviews emerged with a range of *in vivo* codes such as "don't", "sometimes", "didn't", "can't", "a few close friends", "smart" and "probably could do better". Additionally, regarding the same participant, preliminary interviews with his teachers emerged with the following *in vivo* codes: "huge amount of potential", "late homework", "perfectionist", "underachiever" and "capable of so much more", "victimised", "different" and "struggling relationships". These 'emic' codes were obtained directly from the data itself, as opposed to 'etic' codes which result from the imposition of a pre-determined theoretical framework onto the data (Glaser, 1992). Unity was then brought to these codes, and they were clumped together under an open coded name. Although reference has only been made to some of the preliminary data collected on one of the participants, all pre-

and post-intervention interview data and the researcher's field notes were analysed individually and collectively utilising this process.

The second phase of coding, focused coding (Charmaz, 2006), linked the codes within categories which became increasingly more conceptual, compared to the earlier stages of coding. In the final phase of coding, the emerging relationships between the categories of coding were represented visually to extend the process of conceptualising (Strauss & Corbin, 1988, p. 218). It became clear from pre-intervention teacher, parent and participant interviews pertaining to Nathaniel that there were recurring categories emerging: "negative feelings", "underachieving behaviours" and "socially asynchronous development". The aforementioned process was repeated for post-intervention interviews and the use of the emergent design approach was adopted to allow the authentic relationships between these categories to emerge (Glaser, 1992). Connections between these categories were drawn and connections were found across all data sets, called themes, from which the findings of this study have directly emerged. In reference to Nathaniel, these include the ideas of "negative feelings replaced by self-confidence", "reversing underachieving behaviours" and "trends towards socially synchronous development".

Furthermore, the pre- and post-tests and work samples were analysed according to pre-determined criteria based on the Board of Studies English Stage 4 Syllabus documents, the current syllabus at the time of this study. To reduce bias, the pre- and post-tests were evaluated simultaneously by two analysts who provided qualitative feedback in light of the pre-determined criteria. For example, where Nathaniel's written narrative pre-test was determined to have no evidence of a conclusion, analysis of his post-test suggested a "clear vision for latter part of story" and "awareness of the big picture" of the narrative.

The same process was employed in the analysis of the data sets collected on Luke. Data from Nathaniel's case study has been referred to above with the purpose of providing evidence of the rigorous data collection and analysis processes employed in this study. Additional data on both case studies has been referenced in the Findings section of this article.

### **Findings**

The findings of this study emerged from in-depth analyses of the multiple sources of data gathered during each of the case studies. As it was not the intention of this study to compare the characteristics of the two participants or their responses to the Creative Writing Program, the findings from the two independent case studies are reported separately. Findings relating to the first case study (Nathaniel) have been presented first, followed by the findings from the second case study (Luke). Both sets of analyses were used to provide evidence to answer the study's two research questions. Consequently, the research questions have been answered in relation to Nathaniel, the first case study, and Luke, the second case study. Nevertheless, findings from both studies have also been considered alongside each other at the end of this section of the paper in order to draw commonalities that may help future teachers in their interactions with underachieving gifted students.

#### **Case study 1: Nathaniel**

Analyses of multiple sets of data found that the Creative Writing Program impacted Nathaniel in four main ways:

- A marked change concerning his negative feelings, shown in an observable shift towards greater self-confidence.
- A proclivity towards increased social interaction and group involvement as a result of growing self-confidence.
- A reversal of some underachieving behaviours, including tendencies for prolonged deliberation or delay in commencing work.
- Overall, the results of the study indicated a general trend towards improvement in the area of creative writing.

The initial data from the participant's pre-intervention interview suggested a lack of confidence, repeated underestimation and consequential negative feelings associated with his experiences of underachievement. This was evident in his pre-intervention interview through his repeated use of the phrase "I don't know" when responding to questions about his achievement, interests and underachievement. This was further corroborated by his parent's pre-intervention interview. She affirmed the notion of the participant's negative feelings, expressing Nathaniel's awareness of being "different" and alienated from his peers due to being labelled as a "clever kid". Interestingly, the pre-intervention interview with his teacher revealed an apparent contradiction: Nathaniel was described as being simultaneously positive in regards to "doing the work", yet unwilling to "try something he's not competent with". Thus, it emerged from multiple sources that Nathaniel experienced negative feelings and apprehensions about school in relation to his underachievement.

All data sources from pre-intervention interviews anecdotally confirmed Nathaniel's giftedness. Yet, his parent identified that "he ... couldn't bring [his ideas] out ... verbally. But it's all in his head." The researcher's field notes substantiated the emergent theme of underachieving behaviours. Observations of Nathaniel's "deliberat[ions]" in the pre-testing phase, his struggle to articulate ideas, his deletion of work and ultimate inability to sustain a narrative provided evidence of his teacher's claim that "he [has] found positioning himself in another's skin an amazing challenge - he couldn't do it". She further asserted that his hesitations led to wasted class time.

Perhaps one of the most interesting initial findings was the theme of Nathaniel's social asynchronicity. Nathaniel attested that he had a "few close friends" in his pre-intervention interview. However, both teacher-participants noted that Nathaniel's social development appeared to be asynchronous with his intellectual development. They provided numerous anecdotes where the participant was unable to read the social cues of his peers. Furthermore, the participant's mother identified her son as having "low social skills" and with interests that were so divergent to those of his peers that they would "disperse" from him, ultimately rendering him isolated.

Consequently, the following themes emerged from the *in vivo* coding of the multiple pre-intervention data sets cited above: negative feelings, underachieving

behaviours and social asynchronicity. Findings pertaining to the impact of the *Creative Writing Program* emerged as a result of comparisons of pre-intervention and post-intervention data, consideration of the researcher's field notes and observations, and analyses of the pre- and post-test.

The most profound difference in Nathaniel's post-intervention interview was the noticeable difference in his positive phrasing. His earlier underestimations and feelings of low self-esteem, particularly regarding creative writing, were no longer evident in his interview responses. Instead, terms such as "better at", "able to" and "do well" were repeated. He acknowledged, "My feelings have changed about what I can do". This emergent theme regarding a renewed sense of confidence was confirmed in his parent's interview. The participant's parent identified that the Program provided Nathaniel with the "ab[ility] to express himself" and "self-confidence because ... he [knew] that someone recognise[d] that he [had potential]". Furthermore, the parent noted the positive impact of Nathaniel having a "mentor" (the researcher) who "encourage[d] him". This theme was further corroborated through the researcher's field notes and the testimony of his English teacher.

Additionally, the analyses of the data suggested that the *Creative Writing Program* challenged some of Nathaniel's underachieving behaviours. Field notes indicated that Nathaniel never submitted a task late, often emailing it days before it was due. Additionally, his English teacher expressed he had "a considerable break-through in his learning and in his attitude" towards creative writing. Furthermore, the "quality of his ideas ... blossomed" and he became more willing to "commit his ideas to paper" in mainstream English classes.

Finally, in post-intervention interviews, it was interesting to see the theme of social development emerge. Nathaniel's teacher said she had witnessed Nathaniel take on leadership roles within the classroom, to which she attributed his increased confidence in his ability. She observed his capacity "to engage with group members, rather than being an isolate". The researcher's field notes furthermore indicated that Nathaniel's writing throughout the Program demonstrated a greater awareness of a social setting through his representation of a relationship between two main characters in his on-going narrative tasks. Although this does not prove that Nathaniel's social development became synchronous as a result of the Program, it is an interesting finding, indicating his trends towards increased social awareness.

The comparative analysis of the pre- and post-tests revealed that Nathaniel's mastery of literacy skills in terms of paragraphing, spelling, punctuation, grammar and his mature turn of phrase did not change, as both tests demonstrated his sophisticated grasp of language conventions. However, his post-test exhibited a much clearer vision and foresight for the latter part of the narrative. Another interesting disparity between the pre- and post-test was that Nathaniel's ability to create empathy through his construction choices and characterisation by the end of the Program. Ultimately, his post-test was a more sustained and sophisticated written narrative. Thus, his writing quality notably improved through the duration of the *Creative Writing Program*.

To answer the second research question, the data were also analysed to ascertain teaching and learning strategies that the various participants perceived as successful. Analyses of multiple sets of data found that the following teaching strategies from the *Creative Writing Program* were successful in encouraging Nathaniel towards achievement of his potential: one-to-one teaching, positive teacher identification; and individualised and differentiated teaching strategies.

Nathaniel himself identified that the one-to-one teaching gave him the ability to "concentrate better". However, he did state it was initially "awkward" leaving mainstream classes. Additionally, analyses of the post-intervention interview data of Nathaniel's teacher confirmed that Nathaniel had benefited from the one-to-one learning experience stating that "kids like Nathaniel need one-to-one ... where it's almost like a tutoring system where they're withdrawn from class sometimes and given this extension."

Additionally, all data sources affirmed the beneficial impact of positive teacher identification. One of the teachers involved in this study stated that, for Nathaniel, "connection is everything". Furthermore, the aforementioned parent's interview data corroborated the necessity of the teacher to act as a "mentor" in order to partner with Nathaniel to help him realise his potential. By the end of the Program the researcher had built rapport with Nathaniel: he was far less reserved and notably more willing to participate actively.

The final learning strategy that emerged from the analyses of data was the necessity of individual differentiation to meet Nathaniel's learning needs. Analyses of his teacher's post-intervention interview substantiated this theme, as she stated that the *Creative Writing Program* provided Nathaniel with the opportunity to be challenged "at the level that he needs to be challenged at". Nathaniel's own earlier assertions of "bored[om]" in the classroom, were addressed in the *Creative Writing Program's* multi-pronged differentiated approach as timing and pace was tailored to his needs. The on-going cumulative project of the *Creative Writing Program* was effective in not "squench[ing] the thinker in him" by prolonging activities or requiring performance under time constraints. Thus, data analyses made it evident that learner-oriented pace and process; individualised attention and feedback; and, a differentiated learning environment promoted the achievement of Nathaniel's potential.

Figure 1 represents the synthesis of the findings on Nathaniel, as a result of triangulated data analysis, showing the teaching strategies as cogs or gears that worked together to impact upon the themes that emerged from data analysis at the beginning of the Program: negative feelings, underachieving behaviours, and social asynchronicity. The teaching strategies outlined in Figure 1 impacted on Nathaniel's negative feelings and underachieving behaviours, and began to make an impact upon his social asynchronicity.

#### **Case study 2: Luke**

Analyses of multiple sets of data found that the Creative Writing Program impacted Luke in the following ways:

A marked change concerning his negative feelings, shown in an observable shift towards greater self-confidence, positive attitude towards learning, and feelings of self-worth.

- A reversal of some of his underachieving behaviours, including carelessness.
- A general trend towards improvement in the area of creative writing.

Data analyses of the pre-intervention interview with Luke revealed that he had negative attitudes about school. Although he was able to identify subjects that he liked, he described school as "dull" and "boring". Despite confidently describing himself as "smart", he could not identify any personal "outstanding achievements" and perceived himself as "between above average and average" in terms of academic performance. Additionally, his parents' pre-intervention interviews affirmed the notion of the participant's negative feelings towards school. One parent stated that he "doesn't respond well to structure ..." and the other "[couldn't recall] anything he's particularly positive about [in regards to school]". However, his love for learning and passion for literature was evident from all data sources. The researcher observed on repeated occasions the participant perusing the Library prior to his withdrawal sessions and noted his familiarity with a range of sophisticated canonical texts.

All pre-intervention data sets indicated that Luke exhibited behaviours that contributed to his underachievement. Both teachers noted his inconsistency, stating he could be "exceptional" sometimes and "very average" at other times. Additionally, Luke was described as "careless" with his work and "lazy thinker because he finds it so easy". This notion of inconsistency furthermore emerged in his parents' pre-intervention interview as one parent identified that "if he's not interested ... he tends to try to get out of it as quick as he can." Luke himself admitted that he "could do a bit better" and confessed to avoiding homework.

Consequently, the following themes emerged from the in vivo coding of the multiple pre-intervention data sets cited above: negative feelings and underachieving behaviours. Findings pertaining to the impact of the *Creative Writing Program* emerged as a result of comparisons of pre-intervention and post-intervention data, consideration of the researcher's field notes and observations, and analyses of the pre- and post-test.

Post-intervention data identified a significant shift in the participant's self-perception. Where Luke had defined himself as "strange" at the beginning of the Program, he described himself as "happy" at the end of the Program. Data analyses emphasised this as the repeated phrase "can do" emerged in his post-intervention interview. The participant's parent stated that "this is the first time in a long time he looked forward to going to school" as he was "proud of himself for being in the Program". This, the parent noted, was the "only time he has told me he is proud of himself." Additionally, it was identified by the participant's other parent that involvement "boosted [Luke's] confidence" as "it made him feel special." This notion of self-confidence was further corroborated by the teacher involved in this study, who explained that the "most notable change ... has been in his own positive self-esteem."

Additionally, his teacher stated that "acknowledging [Luke's] potential has been a very valuable part of his learning" as this has led to "more pride in what he does." Many of the data sources confirmed that the *Creative Writing Program* encouraged a reversal of some of Luke's underachieving behaviours. As the Program progressed, Luke was less inclined to rush his work. The researcher's field notes observed that "Luke showed evidence of re-reading and editing his work, which is something I didn't see last time ...". Luke himself claimed that he had better focus as a result of participating in the Program. However, the researcher's field notes suggest that there was no significant impact on Luke's organisational skills as Luke made many excuses for non-completion of homework tasks.

The comparative analysis of the pre- and post-tests revealed an improved quality of his narrative writing by the end of the Program. In particular, Luke's use of paragraphing was more mature and thoughtful. His punctuation was more consistent, indicative of his ability to craft and edit his work effectively. Notably, there were no carelessly long sentences, as there were in his pre-test. Ultimately, his post-test was a more sustained and sophisticated written narrative.

To answer the second research question, the data were also analysed to ascertain teaching and learning strategies that the various participants perceived as successful. Analyses of multiple sets of data found that the following teaching strategies from the *Creative Writing Program* were successful in encouraging Luke towards achievement of his potential: one-to-one teaching; and individualised and differentiated teaching strategies.

One of the most consistently evident themes was that one-to-one teaching would and ultimately did benefit Luke. Luke appreciated that there were "no other distractions and no one else disturbing [him]". His teacher claimed this strategy helped him become "better organised" and "accountable" for his learning. Additionally, she stated the value in him having an opportunity to have a "voice" in a more "personal context", which she believed was instrumental in instilling Luke with confidence. This was corroborated by Luke's parent who also established a link between individualised attention and increased confidence, stating that he felt "special". The researcher's observations confirmed this notion, as Luke was able to ask for help without fear of his peers' judgment.

The second learning strategy that emerged from the analyses of data was the necessity of individual and interest-based differentiation to meet Luke's learning needs. Analyses of all data sets identified that Luke's motivation was fundamentally dependent on his interest. Luke stated that he would put effort into assignments that he found interesting, but avoid others. Both parents noted the need for Luke to experience "individualised" and tailored education in order to succeed. Luke's teacher, in her post-intervention interview, noted that withdrawal from mainstream classes and the "individualised attention" and feedback from a teacher encouraged Luke to "take more care with the process of writing and to think more deeply, rather than impulsively". The researcher differentiated the *Creative Writing Program* according to Luke's interest to hook him, using the platform of an online blog as a means for publishing his work and tailoring the study of narrative to his pre-

ferred genre. Thus, the learner-oriented activities and process, and differentiated learning environment were effective in encouraging Luke's achievement of potential.

Therefore, the teaching strategies that were identified as being successful with Luke included: one-to-one teaching; and individualised and differentiated teaching strategies.

Figure 2 represents the synthesis of the findings on Luke, as a result of triangulated data analysis, showing the teaching strategies as cogs or gears that worked together to impact upon the themes that emerged from data analysis at the beginning of the Program: negative feelings and underachieving behaviours. The teaching strategies outlined in Figure 2 impacted on Luke's negative feelings, and made some impact on his underachieving behaviours.

#### **Summary of findings across the two case studies**

The key finding of this study was that, even though similar themes emerged in the data between Nathaniel and Luke, there were distinct variations within those themes. Nathaniel and Luke were different types of underachievers, and yet the Creative Writing Program was seen to be effective in impacting their different manifestations of underachievement. The findings of this study have further confirmed the diversity of underachieving gifted students' needs as identified by Betts and Neihart's (1988). Underachieving gifted students have been found to underachieve for different reasons, they display different underachieving behaviours, and they can have diversely-motivated negative feelings.

The findings of this research provides evidence that specific teaching strategies can be implemented to facilitate the achievement of potential in underachieving gifted students, including: one-to-one teaching, positive teacher identification and differentiation. Four main recommendations for practice have derived directly from these findings: use of one-to-one teaching strategies; the necessity of positive teacher-student relationships; the value of differentiation; and, the use of multiple approaches to address underachievement. The *Creative Writing Program*, designed purposefully for this research, impacted the two underachieving gifted students, Nathaniel and Luke, by way of replacing their negative feelings with self-confidence and reversing some of their underachieving behaviours. Furthermore, the *Creative Writing Program* made an impact on Nathaniel's social asynchronicity.

#### **Discussion**

This research has contributed additional information to our current understanding of the characteristics of underachieving gifted students and the possible reasons for such characteristics. Furthermore, the findings reported above indicate that negative feelings, underachieving behaviours and social asynchronicity in two underachieving gifted students can be impacted by a program, such as the Creative Writing Program, that employs successful teaching strategies such as one-to-one teaching, positive teacher identification and various forms of differentiation. In some areas, the outcomes from this study have updated and revised findings from 30 year old studies, such as Whitmore's (1980) work, especially in relation to how a

purposefully designed program for individual students can improve the self-confidence of underachieving gifted students.

Findings from the two case studies in this paper indicate that both participants had negative feelings, attitudes or insecurities at the beginning of the Program. This finding is consistent with previous research which has found underachieving gifted students are often characterised by their low self-concept or self-esteem (Betts & Neihart, 1988; Davis, et al., 2011; Dowdall & Colangelo, 1982; Fine & Pitts, 1980; Gallagher, 1991; McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Montgomery, 2009; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Whitmore, 1980). Although this is a common theme in the literature, this study identified that Nathaniel and Luke had negative feelings for different reasons. One student demonstrated constant self-underestimation, doubted his abilities and struggled with the social aspects of school. The second student's negative attitudes stemmed from a lack of enjoyment in school, a lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem. This finding adds to the body of literature concerning negative feelings and low self-esteem in underachieving gifted students (Betts & Neihart, 1988; Davis, et al., 2011; Dowdall & Colangelo, 1982; Fine & Pitts, 1980; Gallagher, 1991; McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Montgomery, 2009; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Whitmore, 1980).

Kulik (2003) identified that gifted students' self-image tends to be higher when they are ability grouped, or withdrawn from mainstream classes. Similarly, this study showed how a one-to-one strategy could instil feelings of self-confidence in an underachieving gifted student. Furthermore, Whitmore (1980) identified the important role of the teacher in promoting self-esteem in underachieving gifted students. Kendrick (1998) and Haensly (2003) found that recognition of potential, personal attention and feelings of being valued by the teacher built self-confidence in an underachieving gifted student. The study documented in this article has provided further evidence of the link between positive teacher identification, self-confidence and achievement in the underachieving gifted student.

Many authors (Emerick, 1992; Fine & Pitts, 1980, p. 53; Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 165; Rowley, 2008, p. 36; Whitmore, 1980, p. 398) have suggested that differentiation could be successful for remediating underachievement in gifted students. However, Reis and McCoach (2000) identified this as an area that needed further research to determine the effectiveness of this as a strategy in reversing underachievement in gifted students (p. 166). Differentiation was demonstrated to be a teaching strategy that was successful in facilitating the achievement of potential in both students in this study, but different aspects of differentiation were required for each student. The data suggested the following differentiation was successful for the participants in this case study: an individualised and student-tailored approach to activities, pace and process; one-to-one student-teacher ratio and support; and a differentiated learning environment. Sisk (2009) claimed that there is a myth that the regular classroom teacher "can go it alone" with differentiation, when in actual fact without "professional development and the willingness to address the individual needs of gifted students" teachers will struggle to implement effective differentiation (p. 270). These findings add to the limited findings about practical

strategies that have been investigated to date in previous literature (Gallagher, 1991; McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Whitmore, 1980).

In addition to avoidant behaviour, some previous research studies have indicated that underachieving gifted students can find social situations difficult (Betts & Neihart, 1988; Montgomery, 2009). One of the two participants in this study displayed an intellectual development that was far ahead of his social development but as a result of his involvement in the *Creative Writing Program* he exhibited increased social synchronicity in his mainstream classroom. This finding has contributed evidence to the current body of research about social synchronicity of underachieving gifted students (Betts & Neihart, 1988; Montgomery, 2009; Whitmore, 1980), suggesting that feelings of social asynchronicity do, in fact, appear to be characteristic of some underachieving gifted students.

An important finding of this study was that relationships are important for remediating underachievement in gifted students: a notion confirmed by existing literature. Davis, Rimm and Siegle (2011) found that once a student identifies with a role model and realises that the costs involved in working to their potential are worthwhile, then the student's underachieving behaviours will typically begin to reverse (p. 319). Similarly, Gagny's (1993, 2007) theory of giftedness indicates that teachers are one of the environmental catalysts that can impact the translation of a student's potential into demonstrated performance. Likewise, the findings from Emerick's (1992) research found students who reversed their underachievement attributed it to a teacher who had been a positive role model or inspiration for them. Emerick (1992) suggested that the role of the teacher was significant for the reversal of underachievement in gifted students. This study has investigated this assertion further, and found that positive teacher identification facilitated the achievement of potential one of the participants.

In consideration of all of the study's findings in relation to the previous research, it should be noted that underachieving gifted students are a diverse group with diverse manifestations of underachievement and, therefore, require a range of approaches and strategies for intervention (Betts & Neihart, 1988; Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 166; Rowley, 2008; Whitmore, 1980). It is apparent, from the findings of this study as well as the findings from existing literature, that there is no single strategy that will necessarily work to reverse all forms of underachievement in gifted students.

In light of the issues addressed in the discussion of the study's findings above, some recommendations for practice are now presented in conjunction with findings identified from previous research.

### **Recommendations for practice**

The recommendations for practice, which have become apparent from the findings of this study, are significant because they provide practical direction for teachers of underachieving gifted students. Four clear recommendations for practice have emerged from this research project. Although it is not suggested that these recommendations will be generalisable for all students, these recommendations are intended for consideration by teachers of underachieving gifted students.

**Recommendation 1: Encourage the development of one-to-one teaching opportunities for underachieving gifted students**

One-to-one teaching proved successful in this study for both of the underachieving gifted participants described in the case studies. Both students benefited from the accountability and individualised attention that one-to-one teaching provided them. The level of engagement offered by one-to-one teaching opportunities may play a role in reducing the risk of gifted underachieving students dropping out in high school (Landis & Reschly, 2013). If one-to-one teaching is not possible, due to time and budgetary constraints of the school which Hoover-Schultz (2005) identified as a possibility, teachers are recommended to find ways to implement a smaller teacher-student ratio to give opportunities for the voice of the underachieving gifted student to be heard.

**Recommendation 2: Promote positive teacher-student relationships with underachieving gifted students**

Positive teacher identification was a key component that facilitated the achievement of potential in Nathaniel, one of the student-participants in this study. This finding is aligned with the substantial literature (Davis, et al., 2011; Emerick, 1992; Gagny, 1993, 2007) that has indicated teachers have a profound impact on the achievement of potential in achieving gifted students. This was an effective strategy in the context of the Creative Writing Program that could be implemented in mainstream classrooms. This may start with addressing teacher attitudes towards giftedness and underachievement and providing additional training to equip teachers with ways to effectively identify and engage with these students.

**Recommendation 3: Differentiate for underachieving gifted students**

Differentiation was a teaching strategy that was found to be effective with two underachieving gifted students, when it was utilised according to their individual learning needs. This was an effective strategy in the context of the Creative Writing Program described in this article: a flexible program that adapted to the needs, learning style and interests of the students where possible. Additionally, the provision of a differentiated learning environment and individualised support throughout the learning process was central to the Program's success. However, the existing literature indicates a need for teacher training in order for teachers to effectively differentiate their teaching for underachieving gifted students in the classroom (Sisk, 2009). Nevertheless, underachieving gifted students need differentiation according to their interests, differentiated curriculum content and a differentiated pedagogical approach. In order to facilitate the achievement of potential, the underachieving gifted student's education must be tailored to their unique needs.

**Recommendation 4: Develop multiple strategies**

The findings of this study, which align with many of the findings reported in the previous literature on giftedness, have emphasised the need for "developing multiple approaches" to deal with underachievement in gifted students (Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 166). Underachievement manifests in a range of ways (Betts & Neihart, 1988; Davis, et al., 2011; Reis & McCoach, 2000) and, consequently, a range of intervention strategies should be tailored to the needs of the individual

underachieving gifted students, for the strategies to be successful in remediating underachievement.

These four recommendations are offered to educators of students identified as gifted underachievers. Educators may consider these recommendations if they appear to be relevant to their own teaching contexts.

#### Future research possibilities

Findings from this study indicate a range of avenues for future research. As positive teacher identification was found to facilitate the achievement of potential in an underachieving gifted student, it may be worthwhile to conduct further research into teachers' knowledge of and attitudes towards underachieving gifted students. Furthermore, it may be valuable to ascertain the impact of these attitudes on underachievement in gifted students.

To further investigate the individual ways in which underachievement manifests in gifted students, this study could be replicated with more case study participants. Alternatively, future research could replicate this study in association with other key learning areas, such as mathematics, science or history, to investigate the impact of intervention strategies on underachieving gifted students in areas other than creative writing.

There are significant research findings that suggest ability grouping can be beneficial for gifted students. Future research could build from this and investigate the impact of one-to-one teaching on a greater range of underachieving gifted students. Additional studies could be conducted to find successful strategies to facilitate the achievement of potential in underachieving gifted students. For example, the development of strategies for building self-confidence in underachieving gifted students may prove successful for remediating academic underachievement. This is an area that requires further investigation.

As it has been found to be successful in this study, methodologically it may be beneficial for further research to employ:

- case study approaches to investigate individual manifestation of underachievement in gifted students and strategies for intervention that align with participants' needs;

- an extended timeframe; and

- multiple sources of data gathering to provide a comprehensive picture of underachievement in a gifted individual.

Finally, future research into the reasons behind and the outcomes of underachievement in gifted students should continue to include the perspective and voice of the underachieving gifted student, a concern also cited by Coleman, Micko and Cross (2016), as modelled in this study.

#### Conclusion

The research study, reported in this article, employed two separate in-depth case studies to answer the following two research questions:

- What is the impact of a specifically designed part-time withdrawal program (the Creative Writing Program) on an underachieving gifted student?

What teaching strategies are successful in facilitating the achievement of potential in an underachieving gifted student?

Data were gathered from multiple sources and perspectives to answer these research questions in relation to two student participants. In order to answer the first research question, the Creative Writing Program was found to have impacted on Nathaniel in terms of increased self-confidence; reversal of some underachieving behaviours; and, trends towards improved social synchronicity. The Creative Writing Program was also found to have impacted on Luke in terms of increased self-confidence and reversal of some underachieving behaviours. Overall, the Program impacted on both underachieving gifted students in ways that positively affected their personal and academic development.

In order to answer the second research question, this study identified three teaching strategies that were found to be successful in facilitating the achievement of potential in two underachieving gifted students. For Nathaniel, the following teaching strategies were found to be successful: one-to-one teaching, positive teacher identification, and differentiation. For Luke, two teaching strategies were found to be successful: one-to-one teaching and interest-based differentiation. Overall, these findings suggest that successful teaching strategies for underachieving gifted students may involve recognising students' individual characteristics and tailoring approaches to suit each student.

The collective findings of the study highlight the need for teachers to give personalised attention to underachieving gifted students. Because of the diversity within the underachieving gifted student population, there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. This case study has shown that a specifically designed program (the Creating Writing Program) impacted positively on two underachieving gifted students through the implementation of successful, tailored teaching strategies. While underachieving gifted students are rich in potential, they do need carefully planned intervention programs enhanced by individualised teaching approaches, to see their vast potential realised.

The underachieving gifted child represents both society's greatest loss and its greatest potential resource. (Davis, et al., 2011, p. 287)

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## Azerbaijani secondary schools teaching equipment and resources topical issues of the learning process

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Resources are used in all areas of life and education, the use of different equipment as a part of the concept of modern education, which focuses on the world's most advanced countries in the matter. Currently, teaching equipment and resources used in the process of learning opportunity, too, has become difficult. The purpose of this study during training in secondary schools and social life of the technological equipment and resources to uncover and to compare the status of use. In the study as a means of gathering information, the questionnaire was used. Taking into account the various data sources to carry out the study, based on random and different criteria (typical state school, "The best secondary schools' competition and the winner of the" Electronic school "pilot project carried out in schools) option is used. The above-mentioned study, 300 students were involved in the schools. As a result of the review process of learning, teaching equipment and resources given less defined. However, unlike the process of learning, social life has appeared more widespread use of technological equipment and resources.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, education, schools, teachers, students, modern techno-logy, educational equipment and resources, content, problem

**Introduction.** Globalization, our world today is constantly striving towards innovation in the future-the-art information and communication technology, computers, internet, e-mail, etc. It is impossible to imagine without. In this

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regard, education system, and the need to develop mechanisms that meet the requirements established in the global world.

At present, the "memory school," "school of thought and action" switch, the school's to provide detailed information to students, too few have access to this information, how to evaluate the information obtained from his activities and how to use them, which is able to bring the intellect, But more seriously, both teachers and resources, the ability to use modern equipment, but also teach the students how to use them, such as the approach to the world's leading countries as well as in Azerbaijan, is of paramount importance.

Azerbaijan after gaining independence in all spheres of society, including education system both form and content with the requirements of based on the latest achievements of international experience significant changes have been made and the foundations of a modern national education system was laid.

Continuing education in the Republic of Azerbaijan, all regulations, as well as the Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan on this issue was held in the center of attention (1-11 ).

The current state of the teaching equipment and resources in their subject and content of the subject, the nature of the systematic use of the age of pupils, teachers and the difficulties faced in the process of teaching, teachers and students in this process, as well as optimal proportions of students with each other to coordinate cooperation among themselves as itemsSpecial attention was paid.

Survey results teachers, education specialists, future teachers, as well as anyone interested in the problem to it was intendedteaching equipment and resources the nature, content and pedagogical principles are based on the use.

In modern times, the US, Japan, Western Europe, Turkey and other advanced countries, the use of computers and the Internet and all schools in the education system is regarded as the main targets for reducing the number of students per computer, in the broad application of the technology is being applied to new projects. In the schools teachers on the effective use of modern equipment and resources more attention. In this regard, the use of modern equipment and resources are crucial to the investigation and evaluation of the results.

Starting from the 1950s to the present day, the impact of e-learning equipment and resources for education, teachers and students on issues related to the benefits become. But it is still used as a tool by the teacher teaching equipment and resources to support education and training programs manner is applied to a place he does not, of course. (12, 13)

According to D`Ajelo Jill and W. Serrin research, education and technology trend analysis on the future, taking into account any forecast can be given. Nowadays, students and teachers to create lesson to attract and interest them in the course of teaching equipment and resusrlarl, how to use them, teaching equipment and teaching resources of relevant issues such as the integration and gradually increases the importance. According to the authors,

the process of learning, teaching equipment and more efficient use of resources should be reviewed in connection with the matters. Modern equipment and computer resources just comes to mind when, in fact, in the video, internet, multimedia, CD-DVD programs, and so on. this is a very different device, such as the use of resources is of great importance (14).

Many researchers, including C. Vesley Merierhen's "Teaching the history of technology" (15), Cavat Alkan's "Teaching technology: theories, methods" (16), Hasan Aksoy "technological trends in education"(17), P.Saettler "American Educational Technologies evolution until the year-1900" (18), B. Seels and CR Riceyin "Teaching Technologies: definition and evolution "(19) M.Molendan's "Teaching technology development" (20), Elin's "the development of technology in the teaching of American history in the education system" works on the basis of the idea that teaching is a part of education, educational technology has been adopted as a broader and more comprehensive understanding of educational equipment and resources, educational technology has been described as a sub-component. t studies The advantages of the use of modern equipment and resources Edris was recorded, showing that there is a multitude of opportunities to use modern equipment and resources in the field of education, more of them are correct, accurate and systematic selection is very important. The innovations in the field of education and training within the framework of the measures necessary to learn the location technology. The learning-teaching process, teachers, teaching equipment and should be handled with three students, education should be adapted to the requirements.

N.Mammadova's "Modern approach to the content of educational resources for the Humanities" (22) A. Booth and S. Aka's "The creation and use of mathematical training resources, location, significance. The role of the teacher in this matter "(23), a research works the use of equipment and resources to support the teaching of the theory of infrastructure, teaching the use of the resource location, importance and advantages of the difficulties faced by the students in the use of resources, the role of teachers in this distress, resource selecting, preparing, and when used to pay attention to what the teacher emphasized issues.

Harvard University professor, psychologist Schacter's (1999) "Training equipment and training aid to educational resources on the topic" surveys conducted at various schools, about 500 students by implementing the results analyzed. According to the survey results, some students in the educational process of the use of modern equipment and resources for them and for this reason there is never a positive contribution and expressed their views on the limited use (24).

American researchers Lloyd J., Dean L. and D.Coper's students 'academic achievements of modern equipment to use it to influence the result of the survey conducted found that students' academic achievements, despite a positive effect on these positive features, not all lessons manifest themselves.

Their research skills of teachers in the use of their technological level and the negative impact of a lack of students had been revealed. As a result of the study is to create inequality among students and origin of the material, the use of modern teaching equipment is among the noted deficiencies (25).

In the mid of 70s of the last century on Education stated that the various international conferences on a regular basis, with a comprehensive education system to be adopted analyst education technology, educational technology in the education system should be used systematically. Such an approach, according to the integrity of the education system, and creating an environment within the system of the technological resource, the second plan, the first plan should complement each other functionally. Because the change affects all elements of resources in the system to correct a review of all the resources in terms of objectives, the development of a policy is important. (26,27).

Studies teachers in the use of ICT in the major shortcomings of the modern teaching equipment (ICT), especially electron education, education system, fundamental changes will create a strong belief in spite of their schools, expectedly to be used and the available education technology, combining still a problem emphasized that. At present, teachers who work in schools and universities, the students and future teachers' theoretical knowledge and practical skills on new technology and emphasized the need to acquire. The resulting study, the lack of technical support for national examinations, lack of time and effort to fulfill the curriculum in the educational process as well as the use of computers and other technological equipment is indicated as obstacles. However, studies on the use of modern technology in the lives of teachers is reflected in the study met the problem. Issues such as lack of time and effort to fulfill the curriculum in the educational process, the use of computers and other technological equipment is indicated as obstacles. However, studies on the use of modern technology in the lives of teachers is reflected in the study met the problem. Issues such as lack of time and effort to fulfill the curriculum in the educational process, the use of computers and other technological equipment is indicated as obstacles. However, studies on the use of modern technology in the lives of teachers is reflected in the study met the problem.

Larry Cuban, American educator and teacher of the research conducted in this direction and the curricula do not have enough space has modern equipment and resources. According to the author, teachers interested in teaching the use of equipment and resources is increasing. S words to say, so far as computers and other technological equipment "over-sold" by teachers and students in classrooms, however, "has been used very little" trend is still valid (37).

As we have seen so far of equipment and resources for the teaching of educational institutions from time to time, manner is used. It is the first level of education and the implementation of technology can be narrow. In this application, films, television, projector, computer equipment and teaching

resources to the education sector, as it very often, unaware of each other, including the establishment of contacts entered, and are disconnected use.

Today, educational technology, educational institutions, educational equipment and resources to a wider understanding of the meaning and application environment is the content. Human resources, training equipment and more efficient use of resources to achieve the first of their annual planning of the educational process should be carried out, must be applied in a systematic way (42. p.43).

The above-mentioned many countries, including Azerbaijan maintains its relevance to the education system. The issues dealt with in this day and still could not find a solution to their problem.

Various teaching equipment and resources, especially in the modern resources and training process of students' daily lives, revealing the importance of the location and they needed a study to compare. Just in terms of the factors that arose from the need for this study.

The questionnaire to answer the following questions:

1. During the course of various training equipment and resources are being used and to what level?
2. Tuition varies according to the type of equipment and in the use of resources, is there?
3. What kind of social life, it is preferable to modern equipment and resources?

**Method 1: Research model.** It can also be called a survey to determine the current situation. Students with various educational equipment and resources in the process of training in the relevant field and the rate of social life were investigated.

**2. pedagogical experiment.** Research the North, West, East and South regions, covering Ganja, Lankaran cities, Oguz, Gabala, Guba regions were carried out in schools. Research to carry out the various data sources, taking into account the random and different criteria based choosing (typical state school, 2008/2010 and 2013/2014 in the "Best Secondary School" contest winner schools, as well as "e-School "implementation of the pilot project) option is used.

A general description of these schools can be summarized as follows: the region has a high educational performance, innovation and improvement-oriented, able to communicate with the environment of high-achieving students to be trained.

300 students from the school questionnaire (8-11th grades, 25 students randomly selected from each class) attended the meeting.

**Students personal indicators.** The following table pupils classes and sex distribution were surveyed. The situation on the number of participants and sex classes, the difference is shown with minimum and maximum rates.

**Students sex distribution**

Gender	XI		X class		ninth grade		eighth grade		only	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
boy	30	40	34	45	33	44	35	46.67	132	44
Girl	45	60	41	55	42	56	40	53,33	168	56
only	75	100	75	100	75	100	75	100	300	100

Sheets (1), the sex of the students who participated in this survey 44 per cent of the division, boys, girls make up 56 per cent. The number of pupils in classes, almost evenly distributed.

The sex distribution of students' grades in the chart below (1) is shown. The analysis shows that there is a difference sharply among their number. The total number of female students than male students are more than a little bit.

***The interpretation of the data.*** Learning process modern equipment and resources (visual, computer, internet, projection projector, video, CD / DVD, test items, newspapers, magazines, etc., written resources, intelligent (smart) board, extracurricular teachers and the internet (e-mail / e-mail) on the use of communication and social sharing tool Students were given the questionnaire answers and their interpretation.

The study used survey questions were analyzed with the help of SPSS, the results were interpreted by means of tables and graphs, The results obtained were compared, To what extent is the use of teaching equipment and resources in the process of teaching and what teaching equipment and resources given the preference was determined .

#### ***Teaching equipment and resources in the educational process***

The following questionnaire was given to the interpretation of the data obtained. In this study, the learning process with the help of survey modern equipment and resources revealed thoughts regarding the use of 300 students, the answers are described by means of tables and graphs.

The table below (2) of the students in the learning process of visual resources It was stated in the order of answers to the question about the use of performance.

***Table 2***

The school type:	Using From the vosual resources									
	Regularly every day				2-3 times in a week		1 time in a month		Never	
	numb er	n	%	n	%	n	%	Numbe r	n	
State schools	100	0	0,00%	20	20%	47	47,00%	33	33,00%	
"The best secondary schools' competition in which the winner	100	2	2.00%	33	33%	33	33,00%	32	32.00%	
"E schools "	100	20	18.00%	37	37%	24	24.00%	19	19.00%	

only	300	22	7.33%	90	30%	104	34.67%	84	28.00%
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Due to Sheets, 2 under the typical public schools: visual resources and 20 percent of teachers in the educational process, "2-3 times in a week". 80 percent or "Never" does not use; or "1 time per month" are used. "Regularly every day," is not used. "The best secondary schools' competition in which the winner 32 per cent of the teachers "never" does not use; 33 percent "1 time per month" is used; 33 percent "2-3 times a week," uses. Only 2 per cent "on a regular basis every day," uses. "Electronic school" at a percentage of the visual resources teachers "Never" does not use; 24 percent "1 time per month" is used; 37 per cent of the "2-3 times a week," uses; 20 percent "on a regular basis every day," uses.

### *Graphic visualization of the responses regarding the use of resources*

The above schedule, (2) according to each of the three school type ( "e-school" s typical public schools and "The Best Secondary School" contest in the schools) teaching in the visual resources commonly used indicators is as follows: 28 per cent "never" used not; 34.67 percent "1 time per month" is used in 30 per cent "2-3 times a week" is used; 7.33 percent "on a regular basis every day," is used.

The graphic description of the low price of 7.33 per cent and 34.67 per cent, the highest price.

The table below (3) students in the learning process, test orders It was stated in the order of answers to the question about the use of performance

**Table 3.**

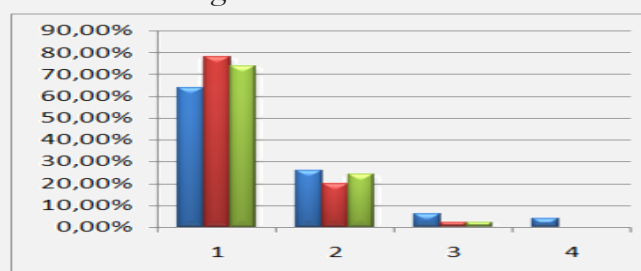
The school type	tests use								
	Regularly every day			2-3 times in a week		1 time in a months		Never	
	number	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
State schools	100	64	64,00%	26	26%	6	6,00%	4	4.00%
"The best secondary schools' competition in which the winner	100	78	78,00%	20	20%	2	2.00%	0	0,00%
"E schools "	100	74	74,00%	24	24%	2	2.00%	0	0,00%
only	300	216	72,00%	70	23%	10	3.33%	4	1.33%

Sheets (3) on the basis of written resources in the educational process in the test orders indicators related to the students 'answers are the typical public schools "on a regular basis every day," or "2-3 times a week" is being used by 90

percent, "The best secondary schools' competition in which the winner of the" Electronic School "at 98 percent.

Comparative analysis shows that each of the three school-type tThere is a similarity est indicator used tasks. Test tasks mentioned above the main reason for the use of resources in the country for more than the entrance exams for graduation and assessment of student achievement, as well as the use of the internal evaluation of the test tasks.

***Written resources: test tasks associated with the usegraphic description of answers*** *Figure 3.*



State schools  
Competition winners  
E-schools



Schedule (agencies 3.2.1.4), it is clear that the fact that all three schools, a total of 1.33 percent of the students in the educational process in the type of test orders "Never" is not used; 3.33 percent "1 time per month"; 23 per cent of the "2-3 times a week"; 72 per cent "on a regular basis every day," said used. Based on this information, the students' learning process, test orders It was their response to the question regarding the use of certain.

The following table (4) in the educational process in the classroom computer indicators of students' answers to the question of the use was in the order.

***Table 4.***

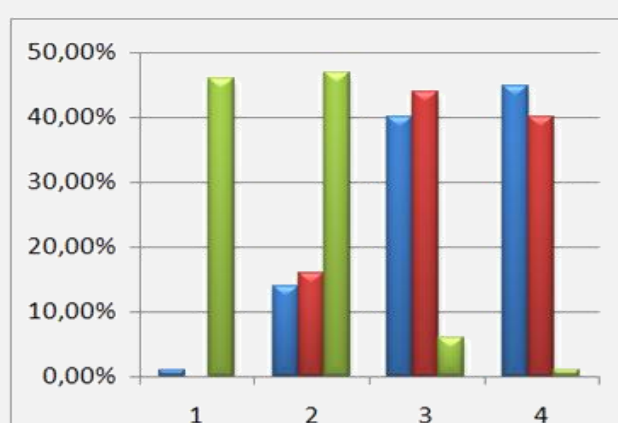
The school type	Using computers in class								
	regularly every day as			2-3 times in a week		1 time in a month		Never	
	number	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
typical state schools	100	1	1.00%	14	14%	40	40.00%	45	45.00%
"The best general education school"	100	0	0,00%	16	16%	44	44,00%	40	40.00%
The schools competition									
"E schools "	100	46	46.00 %	47	47%	6	6,00%	1	1.00%
only	300	47	15.67 %	34	11%	90	30.00%	86	28.67%

Sheets (4), the use of computers for the students' response rates typical public schools, 45 percent, "The Best School" contest in the schools, 40 percent of teachers teaching in the computer, "Never" does not use. "Electronic School" at the figure slightly, whether it is a percentage of the total.

"E-School" at 47 percent and 14 percent of a typical public schools, "The best high school" 16 percent of teachers in schools with computers in the teaching process, the winner of "2-3 times a week" use makes.

"E-School" at 46 percent of teachers in computer class "regularly" every day use.

#### *Regarding the use of computers in the classroom graphic description of answers*



**Figure 4.**

State schools  
Competition winners  
E-schools



Schedule (4) under the "e-school" at 93 per cent of teachers, or "every day on a regular basis," or "2-3 times a week" in the process of teaching computer uses. Compared with other types of school "e-school" media The high level of computer use in education, the "Electronic school" pilot project is the result of state policy.

The following table (5) of the Internet in the educational process indicators of students' answers to the question of the use was in the order.

**Table 5.**

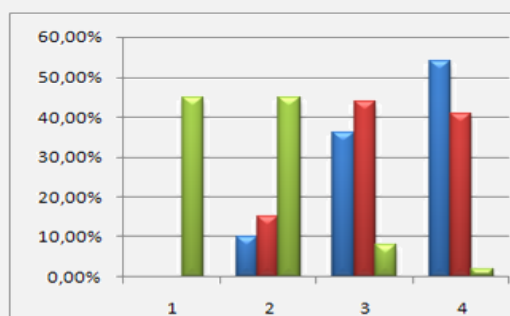
The school type	Internet use								
	regularly every day as			2-3 times in a week		months 1 time		Never	
	number	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Typical state schools	100	0	0,00%	10	10%	36	36,00%	54	54,00%
"The best secondary schools' competition in which the winner	100	0	0,00%	15	15%	44	44,00%	41	41,00%
"E schools "	100	45	45,00%	45	45%	8	8,00%	2	2,00%
only	300	45	15,00%	70	23%	88	29,33%	97	32,33%

Table (5) according to the type of schools in the educational process based on the responses, comparative analysis of the use of the Internet, the computer, as well as an indication of the use of the Internet "e-school" media is higher. Students' e-School 'at 45 per cent of the teachers' every day on a regular basis, "45 percent of the" 2-3 times a week "in the educational process and expressed their views on the use of the Internet in the educational process. In general," e-school "at the Internet, 90 percent of teachers or "every day on a regular basis," or "2-3 times a week" use has been identified.

Typically, 54 percent of teachers in public schools to the Internet in the educational process "never" used Ermira; 36 per cent "1 time per month" use is 10 per cent of the "2-3 times a week" use is "The best secondary school" is the winner of the 41 per cent "never" does not use; 44 percent "1 time per month" use is 15 percent "2-3 times a week" use makes.

*Regarding the use of the Internet in the classroom graphic description of answers*

**Figure 5.**



The graphs (5) described, based on the performance of the overall response of the teachers on the use of the Internet is as follows: 32.33 percent, "Never" is not used; 29.33 percent "1 time per month" is used in 23 per cent "2-3 times a week" is used; 15 percent "on a regular basis every day," is used.

As you can see, the data showed, compared with the net result of other types of school only "e-school" to teach at in the context of Internet technology is more widely used.

The following table (6) projection of the educational process in the classroom projectors indicators of students' answers to the question of the use was in the order.

**Table 6.**

The school Type	projection projectors use								
	Regularly every day			wEEK 2-3 times		months 1 time		Never	
	number	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
State schools	100	0	0,00%	9	9%	33	33,00%	58	58,00%
"The best secondary schools' competition in which the winner	100	0	0,00%	15	15%	44	44,00%	41	41,00%
electronic schools	100	44	44,00%	46	46%	8	8,00%	2	2,00%
only	300	44	14.67%	70	23%	85	28.33%	101	33.67%

Table (6) As can be seen, according to the type of schools, projection projectors to be used in varying levels of education. This indicator is only "e-school" media is high. "E-School" at 44 percent of the teachers, "every day on a regular basis," 46 percent "2-3 times a week" in the description and explanation of the issues in the educational process is a projection using a projector. Typical public schools, "Never" 58 percent used "Months 1 time" use It is 33 percent; "2-3 times a week" use It is 9 percent; "The best secondary school" is the winner of the "Never" is not used in 41 percent; "1 time per month" use It is 44 percent; "2-3 times a week" is being used by 15 per cent.

*Projection associated with the use of projectors graphic description of answers*  
**Figure 6.**

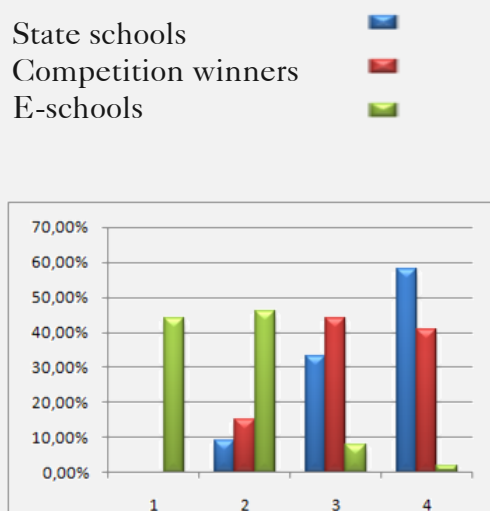


Diagram (6) the type of each of the three school teachers in the educational process on the use of projection projectors are indicators of students' answers: "No time" is not used 33.67 percent; "1 time per month" is used 28.33 percent, "2-3 times a week" is used 23faiz, "every day on a regular basis" is used 14.67 percent.

Analysis shows that the typical public schools and "Secondary School of the Year" winner of the vast majority of pupils in schools with teaching equipment for the use of the educational process in the great majority expressed a negative opinion.

The following table (7) according to the type of students' educational videos, CDs and DVDs from the educational process has been associated with the use indicators of response.

**Table 7.**

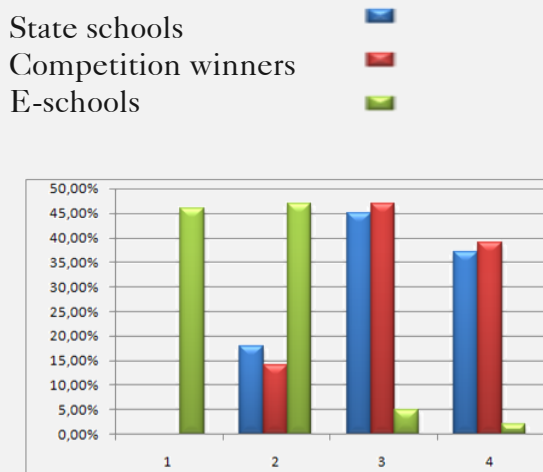
The school type	Use from Video, CD, DVD								
	Every day on a regular basis			2-3 times in a geek		1 time in a month		Never	
	number	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Typical state schools	100	0	0,00%	18	18%	45	45.00%	37	37.00%
"The best general education school"	100	0	00.00%	14	18%	47	45.00%	39	39.00%
The schools competition									
"E schools "	100	46	46.00%	47	47%	5	5,00%	2	2.00%
only	300	46	15.33%	79	26.00%	97	32.33%	78	26,00%

According to the type of separately, the results are the typical public schools, "Never" is not used in 37 percent; "Once a month" is used in 45 percent; "2-3 times a week" is being used by 18 percent; "The best secondary school" is the winner of the "Never" is not used by 39 percent, "month" is used in 45 percent; "2-3 times a week" is used in 18 percent.

"Electronic School" at 46 percent of teachers' every day on a regular basis"; 47 per cent of the "2-3 times a week" on the content of the subjects taught in video, CD and DVD use. Generally speaking, "Electronic School" at 93 percent of teachers in the educational process, or "every day on a regular basis," or "2-3 times a week" videos, CD's and DVD's are emphasized.

### *Video, CD, DVD on the use of graphic description of answers*

*Chart 7*



Graphic (7) description of the type of school teachers in the educational process of all three videos, CDs and DVDs are common indicators on the use of "every day on a regular basis" is used 15.33 percent, "2-3 times a week" is used 26 percent, "1 time per month" is used 32.33 percent,

"never" is not used in 26 percent.

Typically, public schools and "Secondary School of the Year" contest, the vast majority of students in the schools, videos, CDs and DVDs from the issue of the use of the educational process in the same way and gave a negative response. One of the important moments of the striking students' answers to other questions with their answers to this question is that the match between the two.

The following table (8) according to the type of schools, teaching the subjects in newspapers, magazines and so on. indicators of students' answers on the use of resources has been expressed in writing.

**Table 8.**

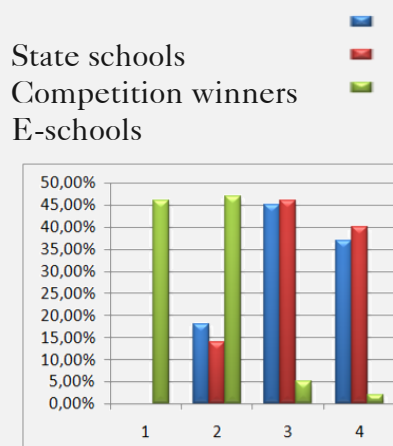
The school type	the use of resources – newspaper, journals and others								
	Regularly every day			wEEK 2-3 times		months 1 time		Never	
	number	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%
Typical state schools	100		0,00%	18	18%	45	45.00%	37	37.00%
"The best secondary school" is the winner of the schools	100	0	0,00%	14	14%	46	46.00%	40	40.00%

electronic schools	100	46	46.00%	47	47%	5	5,00%	2	2.00%
only	300	46	15.33%	79	26.33%	96	32.00%	79	26.33%

According to the type of school, the teachers in the educational process in newspapers, magazines and so on. Typical indicators of the state of resources schools written as "Never" is not used in 37 percent; "1 time per month" is used in 45 percent; "2-3 times a week" is being used by 18 percent; "The best secondary schools' competition in which the winner the "never" used by 40 percent, "1 time per month" is used in 46 percent; "2-3 times a week" is being used by 14 percent; "E-school" media "never" used 2 percent; "1 time per month" is used in 5 percent; "2-3 times a week" is used in 47 percent; "Every day on a regular basis" is used in 46 percent.

***Newspapers, magazines and so on written on the use of resources graphic description of answers***

**Figure 8.**



Schedule (8) the description of a typical public schools and "Best Secondary School of the Year" contest for teachers in schools with newspapers and magazines and so on. electronic educational equipment and resources for writing compared with the level of resources appears to be high. In general, the type of each of the three school teachers use newspapers and magazines, on average, are indicators of "every day on a regular basis" is used for 15.33 percent; "2-3 times a week" is used 26.33 percent; "1 time per month" is used in 32 percent "never" used 26.33 percent.

The following table (9) pupils intelligent (smart) boards used in their answers to the question, the answers are located percentage.

The following table (9) according to the type of schools, teaching the subjects intelligent (smart) are indicators of students' answers on the board in progress.

**Table 9.**

The school type	Using from Smart (smart) board									
	Never			2-3 times in a week		months 1 time		Every day on a regular basis		
	number	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Typical state schools	100	100	100.00%	0	0%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	

"The best general education school" schools competition	100	94	94,00%	0	0%	6	6,00%	0	0,00%
"E schools "	100	66	66,00%	1	1%	19	19,00%	14	14,00%
only	300	260	86,67%	1	0%	25	8,33%	14	4,67

According to the table (9) the type of intelligent (smart) associated with the use of plate indicators students answer is: the typical public schools, "never" is not used 100 percent; "The best secondary schools' competition in which the winner The "Never" is not used in 94 percent; "1 time per month," are used by 6 per cent; "E-school" media "never" is not used in 66 percent; "1 time per month" is used in 19 percent; "2-3 times a week" is being used by one percent; "Every day on a regular basis" is used in 14 percent.

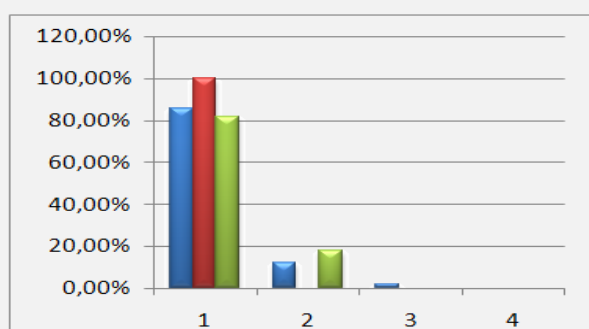
### *Clevers regarding the use of boardgraphic description of answers*

Figure 9.

State schools

Competition winners

E-schools



The chart (9) According to the results, intelligent (smart) According to the board used in typical public schools and "Best Secondary School of the Year" winner in comparison with schools in the "e-school" at a slightly higher figure. Thus, "every day on a regular basis," not the type of school at two in the

case of the use of "e-school" at 14 percent.

All three school teachers in the educational process in the type of intelligent (smart) are indicators of boards on the use of "never" used 86.67 percent; "1 time per month" is used in 8.33 percent; "2-3 times a week" is used for only one person; "Every day on a regular basis" is used in 4.67 percent.

As can be seen, compared to the mentioned e-learning equipment, intelligent (smart) board utilization rate is very low. The main reasons for this, first of all, the teaching learning process in recent years, the introduction of equipment, poor knowledge and skills of teachers on how to use it. Another reason is the lack of appropriate conditions on the application of this equipment.

The following table (10) according to the type of schools, teachers at extracurricular Internet (mail, e-mail) communication tool It was associated with indicators of students' answers.

**Conclusion.** In this study, the main purpose of the current development trend of science and technology in the development, teaching equipment and the resources of the meaning and context of the principles and methods of the innovations on the different school types with modern teaching equipment and resources of the lesson content, combined with the teaching process, teaching equipment and resources challenges and problems that arise during the use of this possible has been giving useful suggestions.

Poll analysis of the Secondary schools of Azerbaijan during the process of teaching the use of new teaching equipment and resources Placeagirdlthet ofthelim prosesinindthe more ftheal vthe hthevtheslthe iPlaceare not participatingto apply, twhen limi their year the more darrow them the cooperation Placeliqvthe jointthe calutm leaning towards the cost of the Place he has set.

A comparative analysis of the responses to the results of the use of all three tests showed the highest type of school. So, writing resources, test tasks "regularly" every lesson and "2-3 times a week" is used in the overall utilization rate of the options is to appoint 95 percent.

According to the students' answers, the lowest figure in the process of teaching intelligent (smart) has shown itself in the use of the plate. According to the type of school, in the teaching of intelligent (smart) board separately indicators used are the typical public schools and "the best secondary schools' competition in which the winnerthe "never" used 94-100 per cent; "E-school" media "never" is not used in 66 percent; "Once a month" is used in 19 percent; "Every day on a regular basis" is used in 14 percent.

"The best secondary schools' competition in schools, the figure is almost close to the typical public schools.

Teaching equipment and resources on the environment has changed according to the type of school-non showing statistically significant difference between the two types of investigation that the school has emerged. Typically, public schools and "Secondary School of the Year" winner of the 50-60 percent of teachers and students in schools with computers, projection apparatus and the Internet in the educational process, "2-3 times a week" and "1 time per month" were being used. "Electronic school" the figure at 90-100 percent.

According to an analysis of students' responses, as opposed to other types of school, "Electronic school" at the level of use of modern teaching equipment, as expected, was high. The result is a modern teaching equipment and resources for the educational process to reveal the truth known about the content. "E-schools" and there is a pilot project of the implementation of the state policy, there is a direct impact of the special conditions arising from the results, a level visible differences.

The main reason for these differences arise in each of the three schools in the type of research that is derived from a variety of educational level. "E-school" hostels, resources and modern teaching equipment, financial conditions, teacher training, technical support and other special types of school

is not the same level as normal. Therefore, "e-school" with the other hand, a major difference between the two types of schools is also normally be met.

According to the answers of students in schools with modern equipment and resources in the educational process than the traditional resources (visual, written, etc.) have been determined to have been used partially. Thus, the typical public schools and "Secondary School of the Year" contest between the schools, 60-70 percent, "2-3- times a week" and "1 time per month" was expressed by the students of visual resources. "E-school" media, this figure is relatively low (50-55 percent).

Students' responses "e-schools", except for the typical public schools and "The best secondary schools' competition in schools in the process of teaching a computer, projection apparatus, the Internet and intelligent (smart) boards almost on a regular basis not in use, the traditional teaching equipment and resources to be used more and more teachers regularly updates in this regard was emphasized.

Typically, public schools and "the best secondary schools' competition in which the winner Internet technology has not been used regularly in the future extracurricular most important consequences of the study. "Never" is formed with 45-50 percent; "1 time per month," 43-45 percent of communication is established; "2-3 times a week," 5-12 percent of communication is established. "

"E-schools" about 90 percent of the students in the future internet technologies to communicate with teachers and extracurricular were hiding. Thus, "never" used 2 percent; "1 time per month" is used in 11 percent; "2-3 times a week" is being used by 33 percent; "Every day on a regular basis" is used in 54 percent.

Students answers just are not teachers, extracurricular future use of modern teaching equipment and resources necessary sacrifices on the show has established.

The result, in the "e-schools", except for the types of equipment and resources, the use of modern teaching learning process is not enough space, not systematic use of traditional methods are given preference.

Teachers' computer knowledge is weak, Use of e-learning equipment and resources to support the educational process and the lack of sufficient knowledge and skills, a fact that emerged from the analysis. The theoretical benefits of modern educational equipment and resources, no matter how much they use the learning process for both teachers and students are required to have a certain level of knowledge and skills. If the teacher is not the appropriate level of skills in the use of modern equipment and, of course, you can not use them teaching.

The results of the investigation as a result of, among types of school, especially with schools Shovlat typical "e-school" s the biggest reasons for the differences will be in the future should be determined by the investigation.

Among the types of school, especially with schools Shovlat typical "e-school" s to be done in order to eliminate the differences between the

great."The best secondary schools' competition and the typical public schools, infrastructure, using modern equipment and resources in order to create a creative curriculum is important information for studies to be conducted. In this regard, the results of research about the direction of the research will benefit.

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## Reflections on mentoring by Disproportionate representation of African American students in special education

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### Abstract

This article revisits the literature examining the cultural gap that exists in public education, while taking a closer look at what it means to be a culturally responsive leader and teacher. The need to integrate culturally responsive practices to connect and encourage success for our increasingly diverse student population continues to persist. This study examined the experiences and reflections of six educational leadership candidates while they mentored teacher candidates. The candidates were also women of colour (Black or Latina), who were selected by faculty based on academic performance. Using literature focused on cultural responsibility pedagogy and leadership, the educational leadership candidates attempted to apply culturally responsive practices both as the role of future administrator and instructional leader throughout their clinical experiences. The action research method allowed educational leadership candidates to serve as the researchers and participants actively searching for better or different routes to culturally lead and teach effectively in inner city school predominantly taught and led by white teachers and principals. The educational leadership candidates and the teacher candidates engaged in lively discourse about pedagogy, practice, and support that promoted cultural responsibility. The data included observations, informal interviews and reflective analysis based on the literature used during the semester.

**Keywords:** observation, education, reflection, leadership, pedagogy.

### Introduction

In conjunction with reviewing the research behind the effects of having teachers and leaders of colour in schools with a community of students of colour, I co-led a pilot program wherein I supervised and observed six New York City teach-

*<http://austrianstudiesjournal.org/>*

ers of colour enrolled in our educational leadership program. The overall purpose of the pilot was to examine a collaborative project conducted in three departments within the division of education in a racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse urban public university. The collaboration was designed to enrich the field experiences and practica of pre-service teachers and educational leadership candidates in connection to two locally mandated assessment and/or evaluation tools: the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity's (SCALE) Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) (SCALE, n.d.) and Danielson's (2013). Framework for Teaching. The collaborative clusters project was designed to provide opportunities for future educational leaders to mentor and support prospective teachers, with a particular focus on the understanding and implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), an educational initiative in the United States that details what K-12 students should know in English language arts and mathematics at the end of each grade, edTPA, and Danielson. For this particular study, the educational leadership candidates were the focus of this research. In addition, I also reviewed studies based on both teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, 2007, 2006, 2005; Sleeter, 1985) and educational leadership preparation programs and how these programs prepare students to be effective teachers and leaders in underserved communities (Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton & Ikemoto, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2010).

#### **Diverse responses to education in New York City**

Up until January 2014, New York City's Department of Education had experienced momentous changes in leadership. Carmen Farisa, the new chancellor, has worked in the public schools for 40 years. For the past 12 years, New York City has epitomised this trend of educational leaders with very little classroom experience. Added together, the years of K-12 classroom teaching experience of the last three NYC schools chancellors - Dennis Walcott, Cathy Black and Joel Klein - was nearly zero (Jones, 2014). In addition to the rollover, one significant reform from the Bloomberg era was the reliance on standardised tests as the ultimate arbiter of student progress and teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, in the existing high-stakes, accountability-driven policy setting in the United States to raise test scores and standardise curriculum where urban schools are distressed, there is slight support from city, state, and national educational administrators to integrate multicultural curriculum and institute diversity policies in urban districts. Some would argue that culturally responsive leadership in the current U.S. context requires urban school leaders to respond to the underlying causes and results of the racial achievement gap in their schools (Johnson, 2007).

Culturally responsive leadership, derived from the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy, involves those leadership philosophies, practices, and policies that create inclusive schooling environments for students and families from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds (Johnson & Fuller, 2014).

#### **Public education and culturally responsive leaders**

Public education in many communities of colour continues to struggle. Committed and talented teachers persist, but they operate in a larger system designed to

produce failure. It would be fair to say that the failure of public education in low-income communities of colour is overdetermined (Ingersoll, 2002).

Teachers presume to enter public school classrooms without the adequate training to effectively teach African American and other students of colour (Blanchett, 2006). In addition, they start teaching with very little knowledge of themselves as racial beings or of social groups outside of their own and are unprepared to identify, implement, or assess culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies (Jubrez, Smith & Hayes, 2008).

While the student populations in U.S. public school classrooms are increasingly diverse - culturally, linguistically, ethnically, religiously, economically, and otherwise socially (Horsford, 2011) - the teacher and leadership population does not reflect this. These populations have also been described as the population teachers would rather not teach (Hayes, Jubrez & Cross, 2012). Given that the teaching force is predominantly White (Bireda & Chait, 2011), we must rely on literature and statistics to help us re-evaluate teacher and leader preparation programs to be more culturally responsive. In her review of studies on the preparation of teachers for historically underserved, multicultural student populations fifteen years ago, Sleeter (2001) found that, as a whole, White teachers brought little cross-cultural background knowledge and experience to the classroom. They also held negative stereotypical beliefs about urban children, lacked awareness or understanding of discrimination and racism, and used "colour blindness" as a way of coping with fear and ignorance (p. 95). Whiteness has long been understood to be the norm in U.S. society. The understanding was simply viewed in light of education about the "other" as key to developing cultural competence, whereas, cultural incompetence is a lack of knowledge about the "other" (Hohman, 2013; Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013). Consequently, learning about the communities' cultures to become more competent, is not enough if there is a lack of self-awareness. The process of reflection reveals that the more one is exposed to cultures different from one's own, the greater the realisation of how much one does not know about the other. This process is not a once-learned experience; the process of reflection is a life-long process (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).

### **Purpose of study**

The purpose of this study is to examine how candidates' reflective experiences in an educational leadership program can promote culturally responsive teaching and leadership in school buildings. Effective principal preparation, according to research, integrates coursework about school leadership with practical experience in schools so that aspiring leaders learn what's needed for the job, exercise those skills and apply the knowledge in a meaningful way, and receive feedback from experienced practitioners (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Cheney, Davis, Garrett & Holleran, 2010). However, there is still a lack of clinical experience for aspiring leaders (Wallace Foundation, 2016) and more specifically is the emphasis of the multicultural and culturally responsive skills needed by 21st-century urban school leaders.

### Research questions

The qualitative study consisted of observations and informal interview designs (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). Using these approaches presented a more casual environment leading to more authentic responses and reflective narratives between the participants and faculty. The study resulted from several discourses between faculty and students about the quality of the program's curriculum around culturally responsive leadership and pedagogy. Teaching data management and supervisory skills did not seem to be enough for students who were teaching in school communities in need of addressing and supporting the success of low-performing schools.

### Participants

The educational leadership candidates in the pilot program were selected based on GPA (grade point average) for subject matter and grade level. Two teachers worked in elementary schools, one in middle school and three in high school (English, history, and science-math were not available). The focus for this study was on the class conversations based on topics covered, field experience, and observations of educational leadership candidates' interactions with the 36 pre-service teacher candidates (six pre-service teacher candidates per educational leadership candidate) from our campus. The pre-service teachers were selected by their advisors and supervisors based on their respective subject areas and GPA.

For this study, however, the pre-service teachers were not observed or interviewed. Table 1 provides a profile on each educational leadership candidate student.

**Table 1:** Profiles of educational leadership candidates

Candidate pseudonym	Teaching experience	Grades taught	Subject
Abigail	10 years	9-12/	Science
Beatrice	9 years	6-8/	General education
Cristine	8 years	9-12/	English
Deborah	7 years	K-5/	Early childhood and elementary education
Evelyn	8 years	K-5	
Farrah	7 years	9-12	History, early childhood and elementary education

Teacher and educational leadership programs continue to be analysed for best practices throughout the United States. For decades, The Wallace Foundation has been working with states and school districts to develop better ways to train, hire, support and evaluate principals and other key figures in schools (Darling-Hammond et al, 2007; Wallace Foundation, 2016). Like teachers in underserved communities, many aspiring educational leaders continue to question if pursuing a school building or school district leadership certificate is worth the time and effort (SREB, 2012). In 2006, Lopez, Magdaleno and Reis questioned what more can professors of educational administration do to develop new leaders who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to close the achievement gap and who are capa-

ble of leading successful efforts to meet the challenges in today's schools. Their study suggested that graduates must provide bold, socially responsible leadership in schools and districts that ensure successful results for students that have been historically failed by leaders of schools prepared by states' universities. Their question still holds true for communities of colour who are not only under-serving their students of colour, but their teachers of colour as well. It is the duty of educational leader programs to best prepare their candidates to be able to serve in all types of communities and truly lead in an impactful way.

### **Changes in the curricula**

The required texts for the course were selected based on a preliminary discussion with the candidates about the climate of education at their own schools and what they had already learned while in the program. The topics ranged from leadership strategies, to having uncomfortable conversations, to understanding the difference between race/ ethnicity and diversity. The selected students were also aware that the majority of our faculty was White. Three out of seven identified themselves as Black and Latino. As it pertained to our program, I was one of the minority-represented and the only woman of the three faculty members. I identify as a multi-ethnic, Black woman.

Some of the literature I used in previous courses focused on identity and diversity in leadership roles. Many of these have been updated throughout the years, but I preferred to use the ones I had referred to previously, as they were still relevant. Some of the literature covered specific sections of diversity and understanding multiculturalism. These sections varied from the umbrella topic of race and its definition to class, space, equity, faith, language and culture (e.g., Helms, 2003); understanding and dealing with white privilege (McIntosh, 1990; Anderson and Middleton, 2010); understanding our own stereotypes and performance (Aronson and Steele, 2005); ethnic changes and instruction (Banks, 1981); and understanding the role of leadership (Howard, 2006). As an instructor with a strong knowledge of the importance of diversity, I also diversified the authors of the literature in previous courses to reflect the student body in the courses. However, this student body was different since the six women were not White.

### **Reflective narratives**

In the past, I would go over the syllabi and state a disclaimer explaining the level of discomfort some students may feel when reading some of the literature. Two of the articles on the syllabus were to be read prior and discussed on the first day, namely Creating culturally responsive schools (Bazron, Osher & Fleischman, 2005) and Preparing principals to lead the equity agenda (Barbara & Krovetz, 2005). I realised after the second session that I did not open up with the usual disclaimer. These students also shared that these articles were covering areas of their own teaching experiences that they were aware of but never challenged the ideas presented. The first critical analysis assignment based on these articles was quite informative. Abigail wrote:

How have non-White teachers and leaders continued to teach and lead communities that they cannot relate to? As teachers and leaders of color, we can quote

Malcolm X and Dr. Luther King, Jr. but that will only continue to add to the anger and frustration of many of us [Black people] trying to be heard. In our first session, you spoke of many White philosophers who shared very similar educational philosophies we have been taught. One in particular was John Dewey. Dewey made a great point when he stated only those who have passed through such training, [as he did in Vermont], and, later on, have seen children raised in city environments, can adequately realize the amount of training, mental and moral, involved in this extra-school life (Dewey, 1960). How can people born and raised in the middle-class understand their students and communities if they've never lived it? How can they lead by example without the ability of being culturally responsive? How can I learn from a leader who will never relate to me, even if we share the same social class?

Abigail's critique and questions of leadership and equity were not different from the others' in the class. Abigail identified herself as a Black Caribbean woman who wanted to teach at a school with children who looked like her and her own. However, she was still challenged on the unequal outcomes she witnessed as an experienced teacher. Like Abigail, Cristine and Farrah shared the same sentiments. Both are currently high school teachers looking to transition from their current teaching position to administrative roles within the district. Both are determined to use their attained theoretical and practicum knowledge to become empowered leaders of educational advocacy. While all six students shared their own personal upbringings ranging from working class to affluent, all shared the same struggle of being part of an era where White privilege was in existence and their voices together, were not loud enough.

Halfway through the semester and deeper analysis of the literature, it was clear that my students were not able to relate to much of what we were reading independently and in unison. They shared that the depth of appreciation for what diversity now meant to them as future leaders had transitioned from moving beyond to practising and leading as inclusive examples. This conversation was also the impetus for the educational leadership candidates to assist the pre-service teachers modify their own lesson plans to reflect a more diverse curriculum and instruction. This revelation also led Evelyn to share her own reflection as a first generation student attending school in New York City during the 1980s. In her reflective narrative, she shared:

As a sophomore in high school, I came terms that I was now part of two worlds and cultures and that I had to identify with both. I accepted that being bilingual allowed me to simultaneously be bicultural and that there were more positives than negatives. As a college student attending a White institution, I did not feel the same way. After reading Ladson-Billings (2001, 2009), Ware (2006) and the classic DuBois (1920), I felt, at times that being the only Black student in the classroom reminded me of how different I was and that being bilingual and bicultural may not be as accepting as I thought in high school.

Evelyn's reflection prompted me to reintroduce them to Paulo Freire's book *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1990). At this point, it was important for the can-

didates to understand how the sociological theories, which examine resistance, identity politics and internalised racism that often ignored and uncomfortable to discuss or taught. Applications of his approach have also been made for teachers working at other stages of learning (Finkel, 2000; Shor & Pari, 1999; Shor, 1987b) and learning in everyday life (Shor, 1987a) as well. Moreover, I felt compelled to expose them to the importance of "conscientizacao" by Freire (1990), the awareness of one's oppressed state and insight into the suppressive methodologies of the oppressors. This awareness is the foundation for liberating action that, when coupled with reflection, creates praxis. Praxis, in turn, builds a sense of proactive responsibility in those who would engage in social change. This, from my perspective as a leadership educator, defines the means and ends of our pedagogy (Kaak, 2011). In a matter of minutes, all six students began reflecting on their current leadership skills and each shared their own experiences of how learned behaviors from their previous and current leadership examples were leading them to think about their own classroom and leadership approaches.

Nearing the end of the semester, we began discussing the importance of difficult conversations as teachers and leaders as it pertained to topics of race, diversity and culture. Considering the race and gender of all six students, their immediate request was about having these conversations with White colleagues who were to respond to them in the future. Our last assignments included Bell Hooks (1994), where she called for the liberatory pursuit of an "engaged pedagogy," and Ladson-Billings (2009), with her challenge to develop a "culturally relevant pedagogy," who have pushed the field of teacher preparation toward recognising and developing pedagogical approaches that promote the purposeful recognition of race in the classroom. However, even though teacher preparatory programs have evolved over the last several decades to better educate students about issues pertaining to social justice (Cochran-Smith, Reagan & Shakman, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009), the field has been slow in its efforts to address the multitude of issues surrounding race and racism (Nieto, 2000).

The work of Singleton and Linton (2005), in *Courageous conversations about race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools*, provides a framework allowing leaders to develop the skills necessary to discuss issues of race and diversity. Seeking to push educational leaders beyond the "moral objections of racism," Singleton and Linton (2005) provided a set of applicable skills allowing leaders to work toward the "real, comprehensive, cognitive, and intellectual foundations of understanding" (p. 2). Utilising six related skills: getting personal, keeping the spotlight on issues of race, engaging multiple racial perspectives, keeping everyone at the table, understanding the history and definition of race, and addressing issues of Whiteness, the authors felt educational leaders will not only be able to address these issues, but allow for other topics that have been silenced due to the realities of inequity. Certainly, the personal strategies of each student had to be considered and through several class discussions, we considered the possibility of a few. Beatrice went on to sharing,

Not only have I not been part of an empowered culture but, I continue to fall into mentally judging those in leadership who have not practiced what they too, have been taught. As a result, my students have been affected at some point or another because of my inability to provide effective lesson plans due to lack of resources or other leadership priorities that have little to do with pedagogy and more to do with educational politics. In the end, we continue to be oppressed because our pedagogy has been oppressed.

Beatrice proceeded to quote other scholars who shared her own sentiments about her experience as an educational leadership candidate. She went on and stated,

Up until now, I agreed with Tatum's (2007) claim about leadership in the twenty-first century requiring the ability to "interact effectively with people from backgrounds different from one's own" (p. 22). Unfortunately, educational leadership programs continue to lack a curriculum that provides a critical discourse focused on issues of race, racism, and race relations (Dantley, 2002; Hawley & James, 2010; Singleton & Linton, 2005).

Hooks (1994) recognised that as a nation that objects to the consequences of racism, our theoretical concepts are far from practical. Educational leaders continue to take part in the educational gaps related to inequities and lack of achievements as a result of the inequity; although able to acknowledge the race-related gaps in educational attainment, they often attribute educational inequities to external factors that exist beyond the school (Singleton & Linton, 2005). As a result, holding the external players accountable for internal issues adds to the existing issues needing attention within the schools and students' communities. While conversations encouraging the candid examination of race-related issues in the classroom present a unique challenge for teachers and their students (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Pollock, 2001; Schultz, 2003), there is simply no excuse for their absence in the classroom and as leaders. For too long, the lectures have become more rhetorical than action and our candidates are exiting our programs feeling this very notion.

#### **Post sessions**

Six weeks after the course was over, I went back to gather the results from the field notes gathered throughout the semester. These notes provided feedback about initial course expectations from the students' perspective, current exposure and experiences pertaining to lectures and their overall feedback about the course. Initially, students expressed what they hoped to gain from theoretical frameworks to practicum. They also shared how they were hoping to learn ways to practise leadership for current students via learned conversational tactics and not just topical themes. Beatrice, in particular, shared that she was tired of coming to classes and refreshing her mental library with literature that did not pertain to her everyday dilemmas of absent students, non-collegial faculty, and an unresponsive administrator. The responses from the first survey urged me to reflect on how our program was adding to students' preparation via courses and professional development.

Not surprising, the most popular and impacting literature was Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Halfway through the semester, Cristine shared

that she began to question how critical she was being as a teacher of students whose pedagogical experiences have been limited due to the lack of resources. She lamented how much of what she was teaching was not only limiting her students' ability to challenge the curriculum, but how she too was becoming conditioned to teach the importance of finding an answer and not the process of finding the answer that was most suitable for the student. Cristine shared how much of what she was now analysing was different, yet the same. This student had shared that some of these articles were introduced to her earlier as an undergraduate and graduate student and that they no longer had the same impact on her as they did then. After re-reading authors like Steeler and Freire, this student shared how upset she was at her own inability to analyse her own educational experiences in the past. She proceeded by stating,

After reading the work of these two authors, I am able to see how my educational and teaching experiences are interrelating. I was becoming part of Freire's "banking education" and assumed that those students who memorized without questioning the curriculum were critical thinkers. I did not realize that the students asking me questions were not asking because they didn't know, but because they were questioning what they were reading. These were teachable moments for me and I did not engage them because I was now part of the new matrix of educational attainment. Numbers meant more to me because my administration expected me to have a higher rate of passing students than a higher rate of intellectual students.

Like Deborah and Cristine, the other four students expressed how much power they felt they did not have in their current positions, and the lack of preparation they were feeling due to former educators and leaders. The realisation of not feeling empowered after obtaining years of formal education and being exposed to high pedagogical content that could have raised their own intellectual capital, if adequately prepared, led to resentment. These candidates had begun to accept the realisation of their own strive to succeed within their careers. They realised the importance of opportunities and the importance of staying relevant as a teacher and future leader.

In analysing the last set of survey responses, the issue of how we prepare school leaders continued to surface. Throughout the semester, these students were able to recognise the challenges they were currently facing as teachers and future leaders. They also recognised their responsibilities as educators and the importance of increasing their human, social and educational capital. Abigail and Deborah raised an important area of discourse, when they mentioned that understanding theoretical and sociological dialogues were not enough to make sense of the continued inequities that persist at a time when they should not. Farrah did not oppose what she had read and revisited, but wrote,

I have heard White and non-White teachers and administrators in my building admit to not holding the same expectations for all students based on state mandates. These teachers and administrators are constantly quoting Maslow's hierarchy of needs to blame student failure. They think that home issues are too harmful and that students cannot focus. These same teachers and administrators have also stated

that this kind of empathy will only continue to hinder our students' ability to succeed and will fail. There are too many studies and workshops that have exposed the implications of the lack of higher order needs and the affects on students. Recognizing that poverty has a profound influence on academic outcome is not a new idea (Coleman et al, 1966; Noguera & Wells, 2011). Listening to these teachers and administrators reflect what today's policymakers and reformers continuously and boldly state that poverty is not an excuse. If the leaders of today are convinced with these ideas, then how can six of us combat the challenges we are being presented with? Policymakers are too busy creating policies that will probably be effective if they took the time to read Dewey's work.

Farrah's position was aligned with the overall goal of the pilot's intention to create a crosswalk between the Danielson framework, edTPA, and Common Core State Standards. All are policy-driven methods of assessing education performance. These methods have impacted classroom instruction, teacher evaluation and student achievement overall.

After reading the rest of the survey responses, it was clear that these students had utilised their lecture conversations with their practicum responsibilities. These students demonstrated a number of emotions, thoughts and ideas via assignments and surveys. Their understanding of the literature along with their own experiences led to several off-the-record conversations about their future in education. As postgraduate students, not only were their academic agendas more advanced as a result of the pilot, but their personal positions within the field of education were now shifting. During observations, the interaction with pre-service teacher candidates were very strategised and informed. Each of the educational leadership students promoted an environment of communication, reflection and dialogue. Their positions as Fleaders' demonstrated their abilities to speak with their mentees as individuals and as a group in ways that avoided room for miscommunication. Most impressive were the candidates' abilities to understand that race, ethnicity, culture, and gender were huge parts of their approaches. The mentees were quite impressed with the level of involvement, interest, and investment the educational leadership candidates provided. In a matter of 14 weeks, these students' academic and educational leadership curiosity assisted them in practising to become effective administrators and mentors to pre-teacher candidates.

After revisiting the students' critiques and feedback, the need to revise the syllabi was evident. Each student made suggestions about readings they thought had made an impact on their current and future positions. And so I did. Several of the new additions have derived from my own graduate school experiences as a student. The impact of Jean Anyon's *Radical possibilities: Public policy, urban education, and a new social movement* (2014) and *Ghetto schooling* (1997) demonstrate the results of situational and transitional leadership. Others like Freire (1970) and Delpit (1988), Nieto (2000), Banks (2006), and Ogbu (1978) continued to be supported by these students for two reasons; these authors were women and/or of colour. They shared the importance of reading literature and learning about theories that were relative to their own experiences.

When students are cognisant and have a heightened level of understanding of educational inequities and diversity, it is easier for educational leadership faculty to provide literature and learning tools that are not as simplified. Since these six candidates do not resemble the majority of textbooks our courses have provided in the past, it was critical for me to focus on the relationship between leadership and diversity. The impact of these areas contributed to understanding the impact of cultural responses of all educational players. Essentially, students were able to make the connection of the lecture with practicum independently by reflecting on their own cultural awareness.

### **Conclusion**

These students did not echo the typical American teacher, but they did echo the students' population they worked with. After the courses, each shared positive and negative perceptions on their ideas of diversity, leadership, and culture and what that means for the future of education. These students were also aware that culture, while taught at home, plays a huge role in the way interactions among school leaders, teachers, staff, and students take place. Abigail reflected by stating that as long as cultures are celebrated among all, diversity will be infused into the school culture and pedagogy organically.

This cohort of students did not represent the overall population of our program at all. As such, it was important for all of us to understand that while these conversations were comfortable to discuss among the group, the challenge was to practise these conversations with others in the program and at their schools. However, while these discussions were informative and at times resentful, the data based on diversity variables continue to shed light on the inequalities of education and leadership. Knowing that these teachers did not reflect the previously chosen literature, it was imperative to modify the courses in order to address the qualities of an effective leader. Similarly to the K-12 population now shifting, pre-service teachers are too. Sleeter (2001) suggested that although most research in multicultural teacher education examines how to prepare White pre-service teachers, much more could be done to bring into the profession teachers who culturally match the children in the schools. The same can be said for programs that recruit educational leadership candidates who reflect the children in their schools. Further research on the impact of educational leaders of colour on teachers and children of colour is needed.

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## Language teacher supply: Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs

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### Abstract

This paper investigates the media coverage regarding language teacher supply in six English-speaking countries: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. These countries have been referred to collectively as the 'Anglobubble', a "part of the world, with a concentration of monolingual English speakers, that operates in English, thinks it only natural that everything should happen in English and should logically be experienced and understood in English". In each of these countries various programs and policies have been adopted to improve the state of language education, and important inroads have been made. However, there is still much more to be done to ensure that the opportunity to learn other languages is available for all students. As a result, increased efforts are being made to introduce and expand educational programs to teach languages. Thus, now more than ever, an appropriate language teacher supply is needed to support the internationalisation process of citizens. However, a language teacher supply crisis is emerging. The content analysis study reported here, explored how the issue of language teacher supply was portrayed in print-based newspaper media from six English-speaking countries between 2010 and 2016. The findings indicate that there is an ongoing crisis with the supply of language teachers in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. Further, in areas where language education is being propelled by top-down political agendas, sustainable progress is limited. Attention is focused on a small number of 'popular' languages, with indigenous languages all but forgotten. In contrast, in areas where grass-roots community movements are present, actions are being undertaken to find genuine and sustainable solutions. This is also bringing a more posi-

tive media discourse, and, as such, increased social awareness of and value for language education.

**Keywords:** appropriate language, education, community movements.

### Introduction

A shortage of language teachers is threatening the efficacy of language education programs across many English-speaking countries (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011; Friedman, 2016; McElroy, 2016; Ratcliffe, 2013). While the shortage of language teachers has been given some attention in political and academic circles, this paper attempts to investigate public perceptions and popular social discourse, as reflected in its representation and portrayal in mainstream media. The authors were encouraged by a recent paper published in *Issues in Educational Research*, which analysed media coverage of teacher shortages in Australia, and encouraged other researchers to "examine the reporting of other educational issues to ascertain whether the tendency to negative and superficial reporting is widespread" (Shine, 2016, p. 511). This paper presents insights about the particular issue of language teacher supply, and takes an international focus.

Despite the broad commonalities of the six countries, there are key social, political, and historical differences which make each country's situation unique. Unfortunately, the space limitation of this paper precludes a more in-depth discussion of each country, although key differences are presented throughout the paper as they become apparent through the differences in media coverage.

### Research methodology

The design of the study was a content analysis of paper-based newspaper articles from Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. Paper-based newspapers were chosen because, despite the rapid growth in online channels for news distribution, most newspaper reading still happens in print (Barthel, 2016). Furthermore, print-based newspapers remain a powerful tool in shaping public opinion and influencing policy (Greenslade, 2011).

Data were collected from print-based newspapers, using the online databases ProQuest Newsstand, ProQuest Australia and New Zealand Newsstand, Canadian Newsstand Complete, and UK Newsstand. These databases were selected because they cover more than 2000 newspaper titles from all six countries under investigation. Combinations of the search terms 'foreign', 'second', 'language', 'teacher', 'supply', 'recruitment', 'attrition', 'retention', and 'shortage' were used. Included in the analysis were original, full-text, print-based newspaper articles, from January 2010 to December 2016, which made at least one mention of the supply of language teachers in schools. Editorials and letters to the editor were not within the scope of this study because they are of personal and opinion-based nature.

Content analysis is an empirically grounded method of analysing meaningful matter, "that is, data whose physical manifestations are secondary to what they mean to particular populations of people" (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 5). Newspapers

often come under the eye of content analysis researchers, due to their significant impact on public awareness. Online channels are becoming increasingly popular methods for the dissemination and consumption of news media. However, with a longer history of investigative journalism, newspapers have been found to wield considerable influence over the content of newer media (McCombs, Holbert, Kiousis & Wanta, 2011; Pew Research Centre, 2010). "As well as *influencing* public opinion, mass media *reflect* opinion and perceptions through reporting what other people, companies and organizations are saying and doing" (Macnamara, 2005, p. 21), and as such is an ideal way of better understanding the issue of language teacher supply.

As proposed by Neuendorf (2002), analyses were conducted of both the form and content characteristics of the newspaper coverage in relation to language teacher supply. In a content analysis, it is important to consider content and form characteristics, in particular, because "form characteristics are often extremely important mediators of the content elements" (p. 24). Therefore, the research study adopted a six-step process to analyse the content and form of the articles, starting with familiarisation, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes, before developing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure reliability and replicability of the findings, explicit coding instructions were used by two coders to ensure that obtained ratings were "not the idiosyncratic results of one rater's subjective judgement" (Tinsley & Weiss, 1975, p. 359). The results of the analyses are also available for review, introducing transparency and accountability.

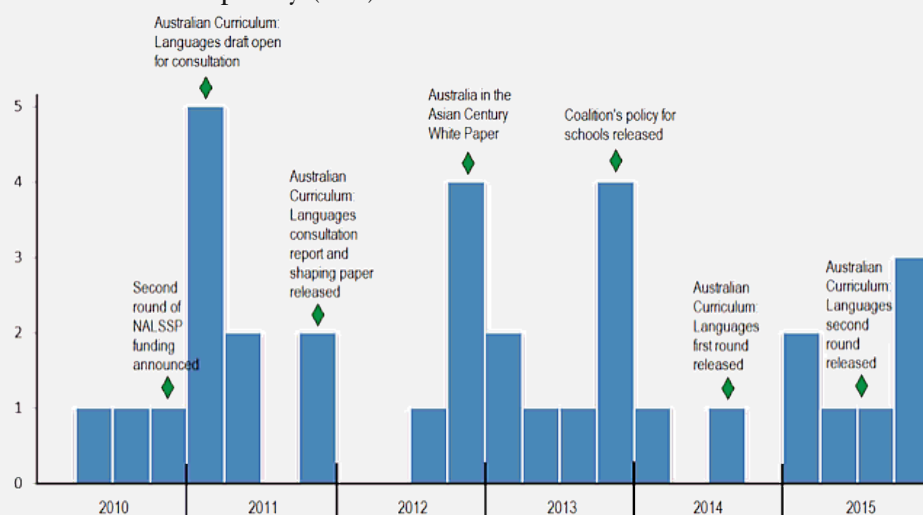
### Results and discussion

When interpreting the outcomes of the data analysis, it is important to bear in mind that regional, national and international news competes constantly for limited space in print-based newspapers. The issue of language teacher supply is educational in nature, thus may not have the edge needed to compete with other more sensational headlines (West, Whitehurst & Dionne, 2009). Despite this competition for space, the issue of language teacher supply is one that was discussed in 80 articles between 2010 and 2016. These articles met the criteria for inclusion in the study, and were given a code from M1 to M80. In summary, the articles came from the six countries of the 'Anglobubble', in order of frequency these were Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, the United States, and Ireland, with details shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Frequency of newspaper articles mentioning language teacher supply, by country and year

The higher level of visibility of language teacher supply in Australia is most reasonably explained by the high level of policy development that has been seen there for over three decades (Liddicoat, 2010; Poyatos Matas & Mason, 2016). One article (M9) reported that "every new minister at some point has a love affair with languages and (promises) a lot of short-term funding ... Then it disappears" (Ross, 2014). Adding to this, the new *Australian Curriculum: Languages* was being drafted, debated and implemented during the analysis period, and this has kept issues of

teacher supply visible. Figure 2 shows unsurprisingly that increases in media attention are often seen prior to and immediately following the release of educational policy. While this regular policy activity is driving media coverage, it has also been noted as one possible factor exacerbating the language teacher shortage, as it engenders instability in employment opportunities, which ebb and flow depending on the aims of each new policy (M9).



**Figure 2:** Media attention to language teacher supply in Australia, and the release of policies and documents relating to language education, 2010-2016

#### Stance of media coverage

As shown in Table 1, over 96% of articles (77/80) reported a shortage of language teachers. The exceptions include the single article from Ireland, which reported a lack of job opportunities for Irish education graduates. The article noted that Irish teachers were leaving to fill gaps in supply in England, with modern languages cited as an area of high demand. While the article did not mention specifically the state of language teachers in the country, it cited better working conditions and a "shortage of teaching posts" in general as possible reasons for teachers' move from Ireland to England. This suggests that concerns lie in a lack of quality job opportunities for graduates rather than issues of low teacher supply, and this would also explain the absence of media attention to the issue. Two further exceptions come from the state of New South Wales in Australia, where the Department of Education and Communities was cited in two articles published within three days of each other, that there was an adequate supply of language teachers (M12, M13). This position seems to have been contradicted by the statement that recent policy includes "a range of initiatives to further increase (language) teacher supply" (M12).

Excluding these three exceptions, all of the articles in the study framed language teacher supply as a problem. While some of the articles merely stated the existence of, or potential for, a shortage of language teachers, many used descriptive language which painted the problem as one of urgency and importance. Teacher shortages were presented as acute (M2, M7, M39), serious (M33, M36, M38) severe

(M20), significant (M45), chronic (M53), critical (M37, M80), and widespread (M37, M38, M39). There were reports of challenges (M35, M37, M38, M40, M43, M67), major hurdles (M27) and struggles (M5, M19, M35, M62, M76) in filling positions and meeting demand. Languages were identified as an area of particular demand (M3, M13, M49, M77), whereby filling positions was reported as being more difficult than in other subject areas (M25, M31, M57). The demand for teachers was said to 'outstrip' capacity (M43, M47), and, as such, teachers were in 'red-hot demand' (M39). A 'looming' shortage provided a negative forecast in one article (M6), while another talked of policy to increase language education that was "likely to be hamstrung by a shortage of teachers" (M72).

#### **Depth and scope of media coverage**

Despite the regular presence of the language teacher supply crisis in the media between 2010 and 2016, the articles were often shorter than 800 words, placed away from the front pages, and did not include images (Table 2). These three factors could impact negatively on the perception by readers of this educational crisis, compared to other social and political issues addressed in the media (Cissel, 2012). Thus, in the long term, the problem is deprived the attention that is needed to stimulate further public awareness and discussion.

The analysis showed that around half of the articles gave only a cursory mention of language teacher shortage. This was defined as a single phrase or sentence (or a repetition of the same phrase) that stated or implied that there was a shortage or potential shortage of language teachers, but gave no further or specific attention to the problem, as shown in Table 3.

#### **Content and nature of discussions**

While 42 articles were cursory in nature, a further 37 provided further discussion, which focused for the most part on current actions being undertaken to address the problem (n=23), followed by possible causes (n=14), and to a lesser extent possible solutions (n=8).

To get teachers into classrooms, a common course of action reported in the media was the recruitment of teachers from other areas of the country (M19, M37, M39, M41, M44, M46). This is likely exacerbating the shortage in regional and remote areas, where it is generally more difficult to recruit teachers. In Australia, attempts have been made to recruit overseas-trained teachers through a skilled migrant visa scheme (M9, M17). This scheme allowed visa applications to be expedited for those with in-demand qualifications. However, it was revealed that the scheme failed to address any teacher shortage, with only fifteen applicants successfully acquiring a visa to fill positions teaching in the priority areas of maths, science, language, or special education in 2013 and 2014 (M2).

The concern with teacher shortages is that they sometimes result "not just in unfilled posts but in underqualified staff or excessive teacher workloads" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2002, p. 66). This has been seen in Australia, with the employment of native speakers without teaching qualifications (M5), and teachers who have not passed proficiency examination requirements (M10). While online learning is becoming more commonplace, in some cases

it is being used as a reactive measure to counter a lack of staffing availability in face to face programs, rather than a decision based on knowledge of best practice (M18, M29). It is unclear if these practices are being used to cope with teacher shortages in countries other than Australia, and are merely not being questioned or discussed.

In Australia and Canada there were reports of cuts, reductions, or delays to language programs (M25, M31, M35, M48). In Canada, where there are often more applicants than places in bilingual programs, schools have adopted a range of strategies to cap enrolments. This includes lottery systems where entry is selected randomly, or in first-in, first-served policies (M45, M46, M47). In response to these strategies, some community members have held campouts to secure an early morning meeting (M47), or organised 'telephone parties' where friends and family members gather to use multiple devices to continuously attempt to call the district's education centre until a connection on the busy lines can be made (M45). The main problem with these strategies is that they do not promote equity of access to these programs. Therefore, parents with access to more resources and wider social networks are more likely to be successful. This has caused frustration among some parents, with one quoted as saying "I am a parent with a true interest in having my children learn the French language... and it is reasonable to expect that my child be given the same opportunity" (M46).

Two main reasons are presented in the media as to why supply and demand has not been brought into balance. First, language education is not being widely studied in schools and universities - due to lack of value for or interest in languages (M9, M11, M22, M46, M70, M74). Another cause put forward was the poor working conditions for language teachers, which has caused teachers to leave for other subject areas. In Australia, heavy workloads, large numbers of students, and short periods of contact time, "had forced about 250 qualified language teachers to take on classroom roles" (M25). Meanwhile in Canada, many "teachers start out in French, but leave to teach English because of challenges like parent scrutiny and a lack of resources" (M39). Put together, these two issues create a vicious cycle, where there are not enough students studying a language, and not enough graduates wanting to choose language teaching as an option, which places further pressure on the quality of language programs and the nature of the job, thus perpetuating the cycle.

Several possible solutions to the problems are put forward through the media. According to the president of the Asian Studies of Australia, "additional inquiries are not needed ... What is needed is a range of straightforward, concrete and economical programs". Several suggestions are presented to the media, including cash incentives (M26), to "ensure the recruitment of a trained workforce" (M71), a "significant expansion in language learning during teacher training" (M72), and mandatory French methodology courses as part of all teacher certification in Canada (M47). In New Zealand, the Waikato Principals' Association president proposed a system whereby specialist teachers work across a number of schools (M56), a strategy that has had adverse effects in neighbouring Australia (Australian Council of State School Organisations, 2007; Mason, 2016).

Concrete data were presented only in the Australian and Canadian media, although the Australian data often presented more questions than it answered. For example, in the Australian state of Queensland, it was reported that 70 unregistered teachers were found to have been employed to teach languages (M5) as well as 25 teachers who had failed the proficiency examination (M9). It is unclear if these teachers were working on short-term contracts, or if efforts were being made to ensure they could gain the credentials required. In Canada, various reports commissioned by the non-profit volunteer parent-led organisation *Canadian Parents for French* were cited (M37, M38, M39, M40, M41, M43, M44, M46, M47), although it was not always clear which report was being referred to. A statistic quoted in four of the articles was that 85% of school districts reported challenges in finding qualified applicants for French bilingual programs (M37, M38, M40, M43). This finding comes from an analysis of data collected from 96% of school districts, and as such has much more rigour than the piecemeal information provided by the Australian media. The lack of rigorous and comprehensive data available in much of the Anglobubble has a serious impact on the ability of jurisdictions to make well-informed decisions for the future sustainability of language teaching.

#### **Focus of media coverage**

Practicalities mean that decisions will always need to be made about which languages to teach in schools. Within the media coverage, more than half of articles (n=48) referred to or focused on particular languages or language groups, as shown in Table 4.

Figures 3 and 4 feature *Word Clouds*, "visualization(s) of text in which the more frequently used words are effectively highlighted by occupying more prominence in the representation" (McNaught & Lam, 2010, p. 630). *Word Clouds* provide a visually rich method to illustrate the dominance of particular terms in texts (McNaught & Lam, 2010).

Eighteen newspaper articles made reference to Asian languages as a collective, or to specific Asian languages. The conceptualisation of 'Asia' differed across the media coverage, as is indeed seen across language education policy. As illustrated in Figure 3, the generic term 'Asian' was the most prominent, used in two thirds of the articles under investigation (12/18). In seven of these cases, Asia was left undefined. Others defined it as a combination of languages, which reflected the policy or curriculum documents it referred to. Overall, Chinese, Mandarin, and Chinese (Mandarin) were given the most attention. Even where Chinese was left undefined, in educational policy in the Anglobubble, 'Chinese' is generally accepted as Mandarin. While Japanese was given some detailed attention, Indonesian, Hindi and Korean were all mentioned in passing. A further article (M34) mentioned Hindi, Urdu, Farsi, and Arabic, but these were left out of the *Word Cloud*, because the article used the terms only to point out the lack of focus on these languages (which, ironically gave detailed attention to Chinese and Indonesian).

The focus on Asian languages was seen predominantly in Australia and New Zealand, where governments of both countries have given strategic policy attention to increase economic and political ties in the region. Part of these policies has been

a commitment to increasing the number of students learning an Asian language, including the widespread introduction of language education in primary schools from the late 1990s (Ministry of Education, 2012; Pietsch & Aarons, 2012).

The reason for the concerted focus on Mandarin is twofold. Firstly, there is a strong desire from Anglobubble governments to strategically align themselves with one of the world's biggest economic powers (Yueh, 2013). However, the economic rationale does not explain the lack of focus on Hindi, with India recently recognised as the world's fastest growing economy (Pandey, 2016), a prediction that was made more than a decade ago (Diamond, 2005). Nor does it explain the continued popularity of Japanese in educational policy, a country that continues its economic decline (Fujioka, 2016; Matthews, 2016). The answer then might be explained by the commitment of some governments to promote their languages and cultures around the world. *The Confucius Institute* and the *Japan Foundation* both have significant presence in the Anglobubble, while countries such as Indonesia are unable to fund such initiatives to support the wider teaching of its languages (McDonald, 2010). While the role of such initiatives is to promote language education, they have conveniently helped to fill gaps in teacher supply. In the United States, where there is "no specific funding for K-12 language instruction" (Schoof, 2013), *The Confucius Institute* has supplied language teacher assistants to schools (M80), and this was also reported in New Zealand (M63).

With its reductive definition of Asia, more than two thousand other languages which are spoken across the Asian continent are excluded (Lewis, Simons & Fennig, 2016). That is not to forget the plethora of other languages that have cultural and historical significance across the Anglobubble, particularly indigenous languages, which were present in 10 articles. A large number of indigenous languages exist within the Anglobubble. There are over 350 languages that are indigenous to Australia (Lewis, Simons & Fennig, 2016), over 60 languages indigenous to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016), while *te reo Maori* (the Maori language) is indigenous to New Zealand. There are currently ten indigenous languages spoken in the United Kingdom (NicDhghaill, 2013), with Scottish Gaelic, Irish, and Cornish ratified by the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (Council of Europe, 2014). In the United States, around 160 languages native to Northern America were identified in the 2010 census (United States Department of Commerce, 2011).

Almost all indigenous languages around the world are in danger of disappearing forever (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2016), and those in the Anglobubble are all suffering from a shortage of teachers to teach the next generation of speakers (Gilles & Battiste, 2013; Inspectorate of Education, 2011; United States Department of Education, 2016; Worrall, 2014). Despite this, the discussion of indigenous languages in the media coverage analysed was limited to just two languages (Figure 3), *te reo Maori* and Scottish Gaelic, both of which have current educational policy which aims to protect and expand teaching of the language in schools, and their use in the wider community.

In Scotland, the 2011 census showed a slight decrease in the number of speakers of Gaelic, down to 1.1% of the population (National Records of Scotland,

2013). This led to the drafting of a major language revival policy, which included a goal of increasing the number of students engaged in Gaelic-medium instruction.

The continued revival of te reo Maori in New Zealand has been given considerable policy attention over the past 25 years, including particular attention to language programs in schools. While there has been some progress (Benton, 2016), currently almost 80% of all New Zealand school students receive no Maori language education, or their learning is limited to simple words, greetings, and songs (Ministry of Education, 2016). Four articles focused on te reo Maori (M56, M57, M58, M62). However, all references were cursory or generic in nature. This is contrasted with the media focus on Chinese in New Zealand Schools, which in four of the six cases included further discussions.

**Figure 4:** *Word Cloud* illustrating all mentions of indigenous languages from the analysis of 80 newspaper articles. Representation is indicated by font size and superscript number.

The omission of other indigenous languages in the media coverage on teacher supply does not mean that efforts are not being made to reverse the decline of indigenous education in the Anglobubble. This is particularly true in Australia, where thirty years ago the *National Policy on Languages* argued strongly for initiatives to support the maintenance of indigenous languages (Lo Bianco, 1987). More recently, Australia made a significant step forward, with the development of the *Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages* (Troy, 2016). While this is a positive step, the lack of discussion about the supply of teachers to implement the framework leaves some groups concerned that current efforts are unlikely to succeed because they fail to "tackle the real problems in language programs" (Worrall, 2014, para. 15). While teacher supply is just one of those problems, it is worthy of more media representation.

Bilingual education also had significant coverage in the media, particularly in Canada from 2012 onward. Bilingual, or immersion, education sees "the use of two languages as media of instruction for a child or a group of children in part or all of the school curriculum" (Cohen, 1975, p. 18). There is a strong body of research which recognises the cognitive and social benefits of immersion programs, and Canada is in a unique position to draw on its bilingual history. In recent years, there has been an unprecedented increase in parents wanting to enrol their children in French bilingual programs. This increase has meant that the current supply of teachers is no longer sufficient.

#### **Sources present (and absent) from the media**

The media coverage in the analysis included both human and textual sources (Table 5). In both Australia and Scotland, politicians and policy are the main sources of information. The discourse in these articles generally involved criticisms on past and potential policy failures, rather than promoting bilateral discussions. There was overwhelming opposition reported to a proposal to increase the teaching of second languages, particularly Gaelic, in Scottish schools (M67-M72). An opposition spokesperson made the following quote, which sums up the tone of the coverage of the issue.

... we reject utterly the idea that every pupil across Scotland should be taught Gaelic ... There is already a shortage of Gaelic teachers and to try to wheel out Gaelic lessons across every school in the country is not only impractical, but also unaffordable (M68).

In Canada, parents, and in particular the *Canadian Parents for French* organisation, were largely driving media attention, even more so than first appears in Table 5, because all of the ten non-government research reports quoted in the media were commissioned by that organisation. Their active advocacy, research and lobbying has contributed to the wider visibility of the issue than in most other areas, and has promoted a more positive discussion, as their ultimate aim lies not in winning elections, but in ensuring "that children would have the opportunity to become bilingual in the Canadian school system" (Canadian Parents for French, 2016).

The collective efforts of *Canadian Parents for French* have been acknowledged as contributing to the advancement of language educational policy and the growth of English-French bilingualism in the country (Gibson & Roy, 2016). The collective, which began with a small group of parents in Ottawa, has grown to a national network with 10 Branch offices and 150 Chapters. They continue to voice their concerns to the media, to commission studies, and develop and disseminate advocacy materials, including templates of letters for parents to send to school councils and education ministers. They are following the model proposed by the authors in a previous paper, which encouraged concerned citizens through knowledge, activism, and collectivism, to become active policy influencers rather than passive consumers of policy, illustrated in Figure 5 (Poyatos Matas & Mason, 2016).



**Figure 5:** Moving from policy consumers to policy influencers (Poyatos Matas & Mason, 2016, p. 18)

The voices of language teachers were not widely present in the newspaper coverage, something that was also true in Shine's (2016) study. She explained the absence of teachers' voices, revealing that for journalists "it can be difficult to secure interviews with school teachers and principals in Australia because they are

generally not able to speak to the media without express permission from their employer" (p. 511). This is also the case across the Anglobubble, where teachers have been punished for speaking in opposition to their employers (Edelman, 2016; Tickle, 2013; Veiga, 2016). In any case, language teacher associations and principals associations are better placed to speak to the media, removing potential conflicts of interest or restrictions placed on employees. Therefore, it may be expected that the voices of language teacher associations, which advocate on behalf of language teachers, might be more present, but this was not the case. This suggests that public advocacy and communication strategies could be improved.

### **Recommendations for future research**

Decisions were made during the research process to limit the scope of this study. While these delimitations were explained and justified throughout this paper, new avenues for research are presented. This study was limited to print-based newspapers. Online newspapers, opinion-based letters to the editor, and public online comment sections also influence and reflect public perceptions about social issues and, as such, warrant further investigation. Further, six English-speaking countries were chosen due to their English linguistic imperialism and general ambivalence toward learning a language other than English. In-depth investigation of each of the six countries is an area for future research. Investigating language teacher supply in non-English speaking countries would also provide an important point of comparison.

Finally, media outlets make subjective choices, not only about what issues to cover but which groups to give a voice to regarding the issue, and it is vital to listen to the voices of those who are missing. While academics are being called upon to provide their perspectives, empirical studies which present evidence-based solutions to address the language teacher shortage are not being discussed. The voices of language teachers themselves, those who sit at the pivot of policy and practice, are also not being heard. The authors make a call to both researchers and the media to give a voice to language teachers.

### **Conclusion**

The content analysis conducted on newspaper coverage of language teacher supply across the Anglobubble between 2010 and 2016 found that in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, there is a shortage of qualified language teachers, and that this is framed in the media as a serious problem. Mirroring the findings of Shine's (2016) paper, this study also found that the issue of teacher supply was generally treated in a superficial manner, with more than half of the articles providing a brief mention of the problem, with no further discussion. The narrow nature of the media coverage can be seen as an indicator of the lack of social interest and political lobbying to bring visibility to the issue. In that sense, the issue of language teacher supply can be seen as reflective of the wider lack of social interest and value given to language education in many communities in English-speaking countries.

Interest in language education in the 'Anglobubble' is probably more widespread than the media focus would suggest, particularly as all of these countries

have rich multilingual and multicultural populations. Language education has been used by many governments as a political tool for economic advantage. This has helped put and keep languages on the public agenda in many parts of the 'Anglobubble', particularly Australia. However, the economic rationale does not work as the main rationale for language education in schools. For those passionate about language education for their children, students, and citizens, there is much to learn from the grass-roots movement in Canada that is propelling changes in attitudes and action in improving language education, and challenging the monolingual mindset. Through activism and organisation, community members are engaging in the political process at a grass-roots level; lending their voices to the media, commissioning research, and driving public awareness. These actions are not only influencing the media coverage but also public perceptions about bilingual education and, in turn, there is more in-depth attention to the issue of teacher supply. By being fully engaged in the political process, these groups are also able to influence policy decisions, and place pressure on educational systems to provide the bilingual educational opportunities they value for their children.

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## News coverage of teacher shortage in Australian newspapers: Examining teachers' conception of and needs on action research

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### Abstract

This descriptive survey explores Filipino teachers' conceptions of and needs on action research which may be barriers to implementing action research in their classrooms. Participants were randomly selected science and mathematics teachers in government schools in the Philippine's capital city. Their concepts about action research were investigated by a survey and interviews, which indicated that they had positive views about action research helping to develop student learning in science and mathematics, and promote lifelong learning. Teachers' prior concepts on its long-lasting impacts transcend from instructional practice to addressing student problems. Furthermore, their perceived moderate level of difficulty in conducting action research indicated some areas needing professional development programs, such as statistics, data organisation, literature searching, and writing reports. Recommendations include professional development training programs to address issues in classroom practices through action research and for the Philippine government to review workloads of teachers and provide them with better opportunities for theory-practice-influenced teaching.

**Keywords:** classroom surveys, student learning, writing report of education

### Introduction

All learners in this era need different sets of skills to: 1) survive in highly competitive workplaces; 2) develop into an engaged citizen; and 3) achieve global standards to become part of the global community. UNESCO (2014) asserted that quality education and training equip people with skills, knowledge, and attitudes to obtain decent work; live together as active citizens nationally and globally; under-

stand and prepare for a world in which environmental degradation and climate change present a threat to sustainable living and livelihoods; and understand their rights. Consequently, this international agency demarcated the teachers' role in ensuring quality education and learning, which is anchored on their overarching goal, Ensuring equitable, quality education, and lifelong learning for ALL by 2030.

In the Philippines, efforts to attune the country to the regional and global contour directed at quality and accountability led to instituting the Philippine Qualification Framework (PQF, 2012). With PQF, all education sectors are tasked to make detailed descriptors for each qualification level based on learning standards in basic education; competency standards of training regulations; and the policies and standards of higher education academic programs. Guided by the vision, mission, and goals of PQF, educational institutions are mandated to contribute to building a quality nation capable of transcending the social, political, economic, cultural, and ethical issues that constrain the country's human development, productivity, and global competitiveness. Specifically, Philippine universities and colleges are tasked to help the education system by providing timely and appropriate professional development programs. These programs are deemed necessary to develop professionals, especially teachers, to achieve high levels of academic, thinking, behavioural, and technical skills/competencies that are aligned with the national academic and industry standards, and needs and international standards, when applicable. Apparently, the Commission on Higher Education (2016) and the Department of Education (2012) subscribe to the 3-5-day teacher training on the pedagogical-content-knowledge of teachers and highlight specific pedagogical approaches to specific disciplines. In science and mathematics, for example, teachers are trained on inquiry learning and science and mathematics student investigation. There are only a few training on practising reflective teaching through action research, which may be brought about by the current transition in the Philippine education system from a 10-year basic education to a 12-year program as is common to all neighbouring Asian countries (Department of Education, 2010). Teachers' clamour for this training is not documented, yet they are required to conduct action research each year as part of their standard outcome for them to be promoted to a higher level in their career stages (Department of Education, Order No. 42, s. 2007). Thus, this study focused on professional development for educators to increase their use of action research that can improve educational outcomes for students in science and mathematics. Consequently, this study surveyed teachers about their concepts of action research, including their preferred areas of study, perceived needs, and challenges when conducting research.

In education, Darling-Hammond and Berry (1998) recounted that teachers play significant roles in the success of educational reform. Qualified and skilled teachers are agents of positive societal change and have a multiplying effect through touching the lives and moulding the hearts of learners. Thus, academia pursues good quality teacher development. One powerful form of professional development for teachers is the use of action research (Johnson & Button, 2000; Johnson 2012). In fact, Mills (2011) claimed that action research, within the realms of

education, aims to determine ways to enhance the lives of children by studying the classroom situation to understand and improve the quality of teaching and learning processes (Hensen, 1996; Johnson, 2012). Furthermore, Mills (2011, 2014) and Stringer (2008) believed in the principles of action research that emphasise the use of systematic process in gaining insights, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment, and improving student outcomes and the conditions of those involved. These capabilities of action research bring in an increased sense of professionalism in education (Hine, 2013; Hine & Lavery, 2014; Tomlinson, 1995). Self-evaluation and reflection (Ado, 2013) are emphasised in the conduct of action research which improve teachers' reflective practice in the classroom.

In the same vein, Johnson (2012) affirmed that action research bridges the gap between theory and practice. Thus, teachers' capabilities to become a researcher-practitioner come into play, making them fully aware of how they decide to make their class more interactive, more learner-oriented, more productive, and more meaningful to the lives of their students (Johnson, 2012). While teacher education programs aim to develop the knowledge, skills, and attributes of pre-service teachers in order to prepare them to teach effectively in the 21st century classrooms, they also strengthen and enhance their professional development programs for in-service teachers to continually and progressively upgrade skills and standards to match the necessary learning skills to be developed. Professional development programs, especially in the research field, however, may only achieve their goals if properly programmed, based on the needs and the current state of in-service teachers in connection with their new roles in the educational reform. In effect, designing teacher development programs would need, as inputs, teachers' conceptions of and needs on the believed tool (action research) for education quality. These are the necessary principles in developing an appropriate and effective teacher professional development program to achieve the goal R quality in education.

#### **Action research and its benefits to education**

With the aim of social change, the concepts of action research were first established by Lewin (1948) primarily to improve researchers' capacity and practices over the production of theoretical knowledge. In his principle, social change may be achieved through research-in-action. From this initiative, several other definitions of action research and uses in the education realms surfaced. Stenhouse (1975, p.142) brought the concept of action research (AR) to the educative process and advocated that 'curriculum' research and development ought to belong to teachers. Consequently, he quotes, "it is not enough that teachers' work should be studied; they need to study it themselves." More recent descriptions of action research highlight the educative process as a systematic study of school situation to understand and improve the quality of education provided by teachers (Hensen, 1996; Johnson, 2012; McTaggart, 1997). Particularly, Reason and Bradbury (2008) used the same principle and led other researchers to apply AR in different ways within the education domain. As a result, James, Slater and Bucknam (2012) conveyed that different ways of applying action research in education conceived different names in the pro-

cess: action science (AS), community-based participatory research (CBPR), action learning (AL), appreciative inquiry (AI), living theory (LT), participatory action leadership action research (PALAR), and participatory action research (PAR). Although action research is now known in different names, all these terms are still dedicated to the critical analysis of classroom practice and the outcomes of teachers' action on the learners (Coghlan & Miller, 2014; Hine & Lavery, 2014). Some researchers identified the different benefits teachers may derive from action research: 1) bridge the gap between theory and practice (Johnson 2012); 2) help teachers develop new knowledge related to their classroom practice (Hensen, 1996); 3) facilitate teacher empowerment (Fueyo & Koorland, 1997), so that teachers are able to use their classroom data in making decisions about their schools and their classrooms (Book, 1996; Erickson, 1986, Hensen, 1996; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001); and 4) an effective way of professional growth and development (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993) that promotes self-improvement and self-awareness (Judah & Richardson, 2006).

Particularly, action research's collaborative nature (Noffke, 1997; Reason & Bradbury, 2001) highlights the partnership of the researcher and the practitioner to give importance to this trait and bring about large-scale outcomes to a wider community of stakeholders. Whyte (1991) defined PAR to comprise participatory research, praxis, participatory inquiry, collaborative inquiry, action inquiry, and cooperative inquiry. In this research field, collaborating participants define the problem within the local setting to produce knowledge and action directly targeting their identified problem. This scheme empowers the participants to full and deep processing through research, knowledge construction, action, and use. Kindon et al. (2007) acknowledged that PAR still involves the recurrent stages of action research: planning, action, reflection, and evaluation. In fact, Pain, Whitman and Milledge (2011) considered PAR to have seven central themes: collaboration, knowledge, power, ethics, building theory, action, and emotion and well-being, in which reflective practice comes in each of this domain as the team goes through the research process. As a team-oriented practice, PAR may bring about change and improvement in the community of practice and may contribute substantially to educational reforms.

The majority of literature found AR to provide many benefits to teachers and educators. In a study in 2007, Brookmyer (2007, quoted by Pine, 2009a:36) found that among 114 teachers who conducted action research, 85% believed that it is an important information base for reflective practice; 89% acknowledged AR as a vital foundation on which to develop professionalism; 84% believed that AR provides valuable knowledge for classroom practice; and 75% claimed that AR provides a context for the transformation of practice. In the same vein, Hine and Lavery (2014) reported the importance of action research as a valuable methodology, its impact on the school community, and challenges encountered when conducting action research. Many researchers also acknowledged that classroom research is a way of improving reflectivity that helps improve various facets of learning (Alber & Nelson, 2002; Falk & Blumenreich, 2005; Mills 2003). These realisations in AR also

reveal that its goals are like those of reflective practice, improved and changed, developed, effective, efficient, and empowered teachers in action.

### **Related studies on teachers' conceptions of and needs on action research**

Achieving the goal of developing empowered practitioner-researchers requires quality programs for professionalisation. This approach to quality requires identification of teachers' conceptions of AR and their eventual needs that will serve as bases in conceptualising and designing teacher professional development programs. Goodman (1986) confirmed that teachers' held beliefs enable them to make crucial decisions on classroom practices. Thus, their beliefs on AR might direct their capability and engagement to such. Glanz (2003) recognised that the majority of teachers often fear getting involved in classroom research, and they do not see how research can benefit their work because they lack the knowledge and training to see these connections. Although some literature (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, 2010; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Dornyei, 2007) reported the significance of AR in practice, McDonough (2006) found that teachers do not regard research as one of their primary responsibilities. Furthermore, teachers hold that performing research must be done by experts, but they do not reject the idea that research is possible in the classroom. McDonough (2006) also found that teachers thought that performing research needs familiarity with research skills. These teachers even thought that they needed rigorous training such as a master's degree or professional development programs in order to acquire research skills. Specifically, the same set of teachers identified AR as problem-focused. They also reported that they were that good in identifying a problem worthy of research, that statistics is a difficulty for them, and that they do not see its worth in AR (Burns, 2010). In addition, Burns reported that teachers identified several areas on which teachers need further awareness and training: 1) identifying an initial idea; and 2) systematically defining and implementing methods designed for the initial idea. Thus, Burns hold that most teachers may be acquainted with theories of AR but still need further support and clarification in action research.

As presented in the aforementioned literature, teachers have varied conceptions about action research. These teachers, who wanted to provide quality education to their learners, also expressed the need for the process to gain the cited benefits of the educative process (action research). The feasibility of using action research for teacher training and professional growth and development already swamped the literature with ways and means; thus, its applicability in the Philippine setting is not impossible. With this idea of professional teacher development in mind, it is a necessity that researchers are provided with baseline data on the Philippine teachers' concepts of and needs on action research for teacher professional development design and customisation, aimed to eventually achieve quality education provided by capacitated teachers.

### **Methods**

The researchers used a descriptive survey method combining quantitative (using a checklist and rating scale) and qualitative approaches (interview and open-ended questions) to assess teachers' concepts of and needs on action research in the

specified aspects: 1) components of action research; and 2) products and outcomes of action research. A developed and validated survey instrument (see Appendix) on action research determined the conceptions of and needs on action research in terms of the identified constructs. Instrument development included literature review and initial interviews with teachers providing detailed descriptions of their conceptions of and needs on action research. The researchers thematised the teachers' answers in a pilot study conducted through interviews. The generated themes served as the bases for the items and constructs of the checklist, rating scales, and the open-ended section of the instrument. Interview questions in the pilot study included questions decoded as thus:

Participants in the study were 300 basic (elementary and secondary) education teachers of the Philippine Department of Education, Division of City Schools-Manila. Since the university affiliation of the researchers is situated in the Philippines' capital city (Manila), convenience and purposive sampling determined the division or unit in the education agency from which the participants were randomly selected. These participants are science and mathematics teachers actively teaching in the government-owned and supervised schools, teaching in the elementary and secondary or high school levels.

The type of survey instrument ensured anonymity of the respondents in which the researchers communicated in a general correspondence as noted in the first part of the instrument (Appendix). This process maintained anonymity and ethical standards as prescribed and approved by the research ethics board of the University. The education agencies' identified supervisor-collaborators facilitated the distribution, monitoring, and retrieval of the completed surveys from the participants. Completed surveys were retrieved during August and September, six months after the distribution in March 2016, attaining 85% return.

Analysis of the collected data included the following: 1) determining the mean scores and standard deviations; tallying and frequency counting for the checklist section; and 2) coding and thematising the participants' responses to the open-ended section of the survey instrument. Critical review and analysis of the coded and thematised qualitative data generated the themes and their corresponding descriptions in tabular format which, in tandem with the analysis of descriptive statistics, provided the impact of conducting action research as perceived by the teacher participants.

### **Results and discussion**

Their identified preference as ranked (curriculum) may be influenced by the difficulty they encountered in undergoing teacher training for the K-12 transition (Department of Education Discussion Paper, 2010). They seemed to perceive that they need action in the area of curriculum where they currently experience difficulty and later thought of their classrooms when this preference was further probed in the open-ended section of the survey instrument which directed the teachers to reflect on how action research would impact their teaching activities.

### **Teachers' needs and challenges in conducting action research**

Impact of conducting action research Further exploration on teachers' needs and challenges in conducting action research, using open-ended questions of the survey instrument, deduced the impact of conducting AR in terms of its long-lasting effects on the teachers' professional career; application of results to instructional practice; and on teacher empowerment.

Table 3 shows the generated themes that represent the perceived long lasting effects of action research on the professional careers of the participants. The majority of them felt that doing action research would have a lasting effect on their professional competence. The sample of responses below reflect how doing action research may enhance their professional competence.

It helps me improve as a teacher by adopting the results of the research in my teaching.

The action research project helps me to become more passionate in the field of teaching and helps me believe that any conflict/problem that my students encounter has a solution.

Fifty-four responses on the insights gained from and learning experiences in doing action research relate to its impact on teachers' instructional practice. While it can be recalled that curriculum and not pedagogy emerged as the most preferred area for conducting action research among the respondents, on the other hand, benefits for instructional practice (which closely relates with pedagogy) stood out among the perceived long-lasting effects of doing action research. The preference for curriculum may be attributed to the respondents' apprehension towards the newly-implemented K-12 curriculum which compels them to be equipped to adjust to their expanded roles. The need to be familiar with K-12 curriculum may have led them to prefer "curriculum" over "pedagogy" for doing action research, but the end goal is still to improve their instructional practice. Furthermore, this result revealed the essence of doing action research where the teachers empower themselves to do something new to improve their own daily school practices. One respondent mentioned that "AR helps me update my instructional practice and compare practice with other teachers." This result also corroborates those of previous studies which have noted the importance of doing action research in understanding classroom situations to improve the quality of teaching and learning process (Mills, 2011).

Skills development as third in rank among the generated themes refers to the process of developing certain skills in doing action research. Some of the teachers believed that doing action research not only enhances their instructional practice but also their research skills as reflected in one of the responses, "I believe that in action research, I could further develop not only my skills in teaching but also my research skills." One respondent also mentioned that doing action research "provides updates on the latest trends regarding pedagogy and how to handle critical issues most especially on student learning." These findings agree with the claims of previous studies (Hine, 2013; Hine & Lavery, 2014; Tomlinson, 1995), that conducting action research brings in an increased sense of professionalism in education

The benefit of doing action research on teacher's career growth as well as on the overall performance of the school is another promising theme generated under the lasting effect of doing action research. The participants saw this lasting effect as an answer to their need to conduct AR on a yearly basis as encouraged by the Philippine education system to help provide the agency and the state with inputs for curricular enhancement or reform initiatives (Department of Education Order 71 s.2009; Department of Education Order 29 s.2005). As to professional development, incentives are given to teachers who complete an action research project. In fact, teachers who produce action research earn corresponding merit points under the performance evaluation system, whereas points are also earned for doing action research depending on the level of dissemination and utilisation (school, district, division) for teachers applying as school principals (Department of Education Order 42 s.2007). Furthermore, schools with more action research produced will gain points under the Performance-Based Bonus Incentive System. As may be inferred from this result, the interplay of the intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation can be discerned. This result may imply that teachers are driven to pursue activities towards professional growth that consequently give them a sense of fulfilment. On the other hand, as they have been considered "overworked but underpaid" agents of change, they are motivated to acquire financial rewards coming from their contribution to the overall performance of the school where they are teaching.

It is worth noting that there were very few responses which focused on the impact of action research on how the teachers plan for instruction and for curriculum. Carr and Kemmis (1986) stressed that teaching can only be understood by reference to the framework of thought in terms of which its practitioners make sense of what they are doing, and action research cuts across the theory-practice divide. Instructional planning is an area that seems to be less considered as a long lasting benefit of conducting action research.

#### *Action research impact on teacher improvement*

Teachers become more effective when encouraged to examine and assess their own work and consider ways of working differently, traits to be considered as empowered teachers. Table 4 shows how the teachers felt empowered when they engaged in this activity. The themes with corresponding definitions and frequency of occurrence generated from the rich qualitative data provide evidence of teacher empowerment when engaging in action research.

#### *Action research and its impact on teacher empowerment*

The most frequent response in Table 4 represents the theme which deals with the conceptual understanding of action research as a way to examine one's own practice. This implies how engaging in action research encourages teachers to become more reflective and self-evaluative practitioners. One respondent emphasised, "Action research help us to collect data to use in decision making and to become more effective in teaching", while another respondent surmised that action research "gives you a chance to examine yourself as a teacher and how effective you are." Another notable response concludes that "Action research can help in my

teaching through developing my skills in understanding the diversity of my chosen vocation."

These responses reinforce the claims of literature which highlights how conducting action research allows teachers to better understand and improve their practice (Noffke, 1997) and empower them to be responsible for their own learning and for others' (Savaskan, 2013). This result also shows the potential of action research to transform teachers' perceived position from being objects of reform to sources and agents of reform as claimed by Pine (2009b) in his study, because the process affords them an opportunity to share in knowledge or theory building, transforming not only their classroom contexts but the wider educational landscape as well.

Acquisition of necessary skills embodied the theme which ranked second (44 responses). The following are the most significant responses which mirrored this theme:

Through action research, you will master various effective teaching strategies. It also develops my problem-solving skills, choosing the appropriate methods or approach. It enhances efficiency in teaching.

Viewed from the context of action research as a cyclical yet dynamic process of reflection-action-reflection, acquisition of research skills such as inquiry, data collection and analysis, decision-making, and problem-solving may be possible. Teachers also perceived action research as an opportunity to enhance their content knowledge in their areas of specialisation which helps them achieve content mastery, with 27 responses counted under this theme as shown in Table 4.

Through action research, you will become globally competitive because of new ideas and knowledge you receive.

Acting on the new information generated from action research makes the teacher more in touch with reality.

That action research is a powerful platform for professional development is fostered in this finding. In the same light, two of the identified advantages of action research for teachers are: 1) improves teachers' decision-making skills; and 2) increases opportunities to gain knowledge and skills in research methodology and applications (Pine, 2009b).

Action research application to practice. When teachers were asked how action research will be applied to practice, varied responses surfaced and generated significant themes as presented in Table 5. The majority of responses point to enhancement of reflective practice which corroborates the study of Johnson and Button (2000) emphasising action research as a powerful form of professional development for teachers. Through action research, teachers become more reflective of what they do in the classroom, leading them to continually seek ways to improve what they are doing.

Action research and application to practice.

Many of the teachers believed that doing action research will help them evaluate their teaching methods and classroom practices objectively, identify student difficulties, and devise appropriate interventions more systematically and scientifi-

cally. Most of the responses articulate how action research will improve their own instructional practices, empower them with ways to solve practical problems in the classroom and ultimately benefit their students.

Amidst the dynamically changing contexts in education, surveyed literature reveals that doing action research not only helps teachers become more effective but also provides them with a personally fulfilling experience, being open to self-evaluation and giving more thoughtful consideration to their learners' welfare. As shown in Table 5, the eight generated categories or themes suggest that action research results can be applied and utilised in many ways, most obviously those pertaining to enhancement of reflective practice. This finding supports previous studies (Brookmyer, 2007, quoted by Pine, 2009a; Johnson & Button, 2000; O'Connor, Green & Anderson, 2006) which claimed that action research improves teachers' reflective practices in the classroom. Personal qualities are also developed because a teacher becomes more appreciative of others' contributions in the field, whilst also becoming more open to constructive criticisms. In fact, some of the participants said that action research refines one's character because it makes one aware of the areas he/she needs to improve on, encourages them to be receptive of their students' suggestions, and more confident in exploring new and better ways of addressing students' problems. Researchers confirm that action research encourages openness to new ideas (Johnson & Button, 2000) and to learning new things, improves their level of confidence, and boosts their morale (Furlong & Sainsbury, 2005). This finding also suggests that although doing action research may be externally driven, teachers may find the experience as also intrinsically rewarding.

Second in rank pertained to how action research may lead to discovering new and enhancing existing sound learning principles and theories in teaching. Their responses indicate that they believed that conducting action research brings to the fore new and promising theories and also allows for rethinking of existing practices. Samples of verbatim responses with strong reference to this theme include the following:

A lot of ideas are discovered through research which will improve one's instructional practices.

Doing action research allows us to think of best teaching strategies. Action research reveals which instructional practices are more effective. Action research allows us to solve classroom problems scientifically.

This highlights the potential of action research as a tool to come up with solutions and interventions to classroom concerns on pedagogy, student behavior, and achievement.

Among the themes, the least ranked concerns the alignment of learning outcomes to national content and performance standards. Though raising student achievement is perceived as a priority area for doing action research, for most teachers, improving instructional practices to raise and enhance student achievement is a basic priority. On the other hand, ensuring that student achievement aligns with the prescriptions of the curriculum was the least articulated, with only two responses falling under this category. This finding implies that while teachers

are seriously committed to ensuring that students learn in the class, expanding and elevating motives for conducting action research to include the national context may have yet to be emphasised. However, the fact that this theme was generated (though least ranked) may be an indication that some teachers could also be mindful of the potential contribution of action research in ensuring that knowledge and skills taught in the classroom must be in accord with national standards. In the Philippines, education is hailed as the central strategy for human capital development, poverty reduction, and building national competitiveness (Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016). This makes it imperative that teachers and administrators ensure that these initiatives support national goals and priorities as they explore transformative possibilities in their own contexts.

Responses were observed that catered to more specific practical applications of action research in the current streams of instructional concerns, like generation of knowledge which is discipline-specific, contributing to holistic development of learners, promoting culturally-responsive pedagogies, and creating support mechanisms to facilitate effective teaching and learning. These themes suggest an increased awareness among teachers of the power of action research as a tool to confront the challenges wrought by the emerging issues and continuing problems in education from a broader perspective.

*Difficulty and non-difficulty in conducting action research.* The needs and challenges of the teachers in conducting action research were identified through a rating scale on difficulty and non-difficulty in the different components of action research and an open-ended question on problems and/or difficulties they anticipate encountering while engaging in action research. The rating scale was composed of eight items using a five-point scale. A middle option was included as the items were to be rated in terms of levels of difficulty, from no difficulty to extreme level of difficulty.

In Table 6, overall, the respondents' level of difficulty in conducting an action research was moderate ( $M=3.06$ ). All the components, in fact, were at the moderate level; not one component is at the 'no difficulty' or 'low level of difficulty.' This finding shows that teachers have difficulty in doing action research, a situation warranting an opportune professional development plan by educational authorities. Although the teachers may have a knowledge background in conducting an action research, they needed further support to enhance their skills.

Specifically, 'Making a relevant presentation of the project and writing an article for publication' was the component with the highest mean score of 3.34. Recently, the Department of Education has included research as one area to be looked into when evaluating teachers' performances for promotion purposes. Aside from reputable national and international journals, some school districts or divisions manage their own journals to which teachers can submit their articles for knowledge sharing and dissemination. Other components with high mean scores were 'Developing the processes of how to do research and collecting evidence'; 'Searching for relevant literature'; 'Analysing qualitative data'; and 'Using technology in statistical analysis', with mean scores of 3.26, 3.17, 3.13 and 3.12, respective-

ly. Statistics also came out as a difficulty in the study of Burns (2010) while collecting evidence in Rimando et al. (2016). On the other hand, using technology in 'Data presentation' and 'Bibliographical entries' were equally the components with the lowest mean scores of 2.87, followed by 'Identifying issues and problems to be investigated' (M = 2.97). That selecting a topic for research was not amongst the top difficulties of the teachers involved in this study is inconsistent with the findings of Burns (2010) who reported that identifying an initial idea is one of the several areas on which teachers need further awareness and training.

The aforementioned data are supported by qualitative responses of the teachers to an open-ended question about their anticipated problems/difficulties while engaging in action research. Below are samples of responses.

Limited sources of theories due to limited materials, books, articles.

How to gather valid and accurate data and information.

Gathering of data for the action research.

I anticipate having problems collecting data.

I might find difficulties in gathering data and information from previous researches.

It should be mentioned that making a presentation of the project and writing an article for publication came out as a major difficulty, even if they were not offered as a response to the open-ended question on difficulties. Perhaps the teachers were focused on thinking about problems that they would encounter while engaging in action research, and not after having conducted it, as the open-ended question prompted them to do.

Also, the bulk of the responses by the teachers pointed out that time and lack of financial support were their main difficulties and may be inferred as the underlying factor of all difficulties. Given the demanding nature of their job and workload, teachers have little time and energy left for research which, likewise a work of its own, is demanding time, energy, and commitment from individuals engaged in it. Below are some sample responses from the teachers.

Time and financial availability.

Time because of work load.

Time constraint gathering of experimental data.

The difficulties in engaging action research: time, health, money.

That time was found in the present research to be one of the difficulties of teachers in conducting research confirms the literature (Atay, 2006; Hancock, 1997; Taskeen, Shehzadi, Khan & Saleem, 2014; Vasquez (n.d); Vec & Rupar, 2016). Thus, reforms in workloads and financial support to teachers should be reiterated to achieve quality education through quality research by teachers.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Action research as a powerful platform for teachers' professional development should find its best expression in the transformation of the classroom. Since teachers study and work on their own problems in their classrooms, they are afforded the privilege to examine their own teaching, analyse classroom contexts from a broader

and scientific perspective and to seriously engage in reflective practice. Thus, conducting action research provides beneficial and enabling experiences which may impact teachers' professional career development; empower them to transform their classrooms; and contribute to the community of practice. To achieve optimal results AR has to offer, a complete understanding of all the facets of AR is a necessity. Teachers' conception of AR may initially provide evidence of how they may use AR in their teaching practices. With a positive conception, Filipino teachers may attain AR's optimal strength in classroom practices, which may consequently be realised through teacher professional development.

The study provided several strong points for designing teacher professional development programs on AR. The research results argued that teachers' perception of AR can enhance both their practice and student learning. Though there were accounts of difficulty in conducting action research, the teachers still saw the benefits of this educative process in student achievement primarily through self-improvement. The teachers believe in improving themselves as a means of providing better and quality education to learners; thus, they seek to enhance their professional competence, instructional practice, and skill development (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Hanushek, 2011; Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005).

Teachers' beliefs about self-improvement are triggered by their perception that they can address students' diverse needs by examining their practice and acquiring skills and mastery of the content. Accordingly, these teachers believed that AR-influenced professional development may develop and enhance their teaching and inculcate reflective practice by providing sound learning theories applied to teaching. They viewed action research to empower them to be responsible for their own learning and their students', encourage them to be more reflective, challenge them to build and refine their personal character, and expand their professional competence. Application of action research to practice yields its best contribution to professional development as teachers become more reflective about what they do in the classroom and constantly seek ways to improve their craft knowledge for better student achievement. Doing action research also leads to increased self-knowledge which translates into improvement in one's personal character and professional image. Similarly, Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scalloss and Shapley (2007) argued that fragmented teacher training lasting 14 hours or less show no significant effect on student learning (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Anderson, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009). Darling-Hammond (2012) pushed for job-embedded professional development programs to provide teachers with collaborative learning (Ronfeldt et al., 2016), links between curriculum, assessment, and professional-learning decisions in the context of teaching specific content (Blank, de las Alas & Smith, 2008; Blank & de las Alas, 2010; Heller, Daehler, Wong, Shinohara & Miratrix, 2012), active learning, deeper knowledge of content and how to teach it, and sustained learning over multiple days and weeks (Vega, 2013). These identified benefits of job-embedded professional development provide the same concept of benefits and long-lasting effects of action research as perceived by the teachers.

It seems critical that teachers believe in the power of action research to impact their teaching practice. Pursuing this path, however, needs a concrete and complete development of skills. Findings of the study suggest that though teachers had prior knowledge and skills in doing AR, they still felt they lacked certain skills for their complete immersion in AR. These identified perceived needs, challenges, and conceptions on AR and its lasting impact gravitate towards professional development and improvement of student achievement. Subsequently, though teachers focused on pedagogy and instructional practices as areas needing improvement through action research, they also want to further the improvement as manifested in their interest in solving issues and concerns related to curriculum, which may be on a national scale. Luciano (2014) and Grouws, Tarr, Chavez, Sears, Soria and Taylan (2013) saw the same thrust on curriculum to enhance student achievement.

With the aforementioned benefits and perceived conceptions of and needs on action research of teachers, action research-influenced professional development programs promise a myriad of avenues to improve teachers' instructional practices and their classroom contexts, programs, and mechanisms, to ensure that benefits are shared with the larger community, and results are translated into deliverable or implementable forms. A programmatic approach must be created and implemented, transcending the impact of action research from the individual to the wider community, which transforms not only one teacher's classroom but also offers other teachers the opportunity to try the potential of the new theory or strategy and make further enhancements (Morales, 2016). Providing avenues for teachers to share the products of their action research through forums and publications not only allows other teachers in the field to learn from them but also inspires them to take on their own reflective and research-based practice.

Mechanisms or programs that will sustain teachers' motivation to engage in action research must also be set in place (Johnson, 2012). Incentivisation and recognition of excellent and high-impact action research are among the possible options. Participatory and collaborative action research may be adopted as a mechanism whereby students also participate, or mentoring opportunities are created for novice teachers. In this way AR can facilitate sharing with both students and other teachers the fulfilling experience of doing action research, and act as a springboard to influence students to acquire the good habits and values endemic in doing action research (Morales, 2016). Chosen approaches or mechanisms may be formalised and initiated at the institutional level, extending to the national level, to pursue and develop Filipinos who are engaged citizens, and to achieve global standards.

This study, however, considered only the preferences and perceptions, conceptions of and needs on action research, expressed by teachers in the Philippine's capital. The study may have more themes if other cultural and language backgrounds of students and teachers are considered. As emphasised by the teachers, time is found to be a significant factor in the conduct of action research; thus, education agencies and universities may work on teacher professional development programs using the mentoring perspectives of PAR (Morales, 2016) and the attributes of lesson study to provide collaboration and efficiency (Doig & Groves, 2011).

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## Evaluating an Interaction for Learning Framework and the curriculum processes intervention in the secondary schools

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### Abstract

The increasing number of international students, and domestic first and second-generation migrants, have literally changed the face of Australian higher education, offering rich opportunities for innovations in teaching. Global perspectives and interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies are viewed as a priority within higher education. For management educators, globalisation, student mobility and widening pathways present numerous challenges, but afford opportunities for curriculum innovation. The *Interaction for Learning Framework* (ILF) seeks to help academics introduce curriculum change and increase peer interaction opportunities. Although the framework has many strengths to recommend it, the ILF does not provide a process by which academics can easily evaluate the outcomes produced by its implementation. In this paper, we examine the efficacy of a popular four level training evaluation framework - the Kirkpatrick model - as a way to appraise the outcomes of ILF-based curriculum interventions. We conclude that the Kirkpatrick model offers educators a straightforward basis for evaluation of interventions, but that as with any model the approach to evaluation should be adapted to the particular setting and circumstances.

**Keywords:** international students, migrants, secondary schools

### Introduction

Widened entry pathways, established government sponsored entry, and targeted recruitment programs, have attracted mature-aged, low socio-economic, migrant, indigenous and international students to the Australian HE sector (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008; Chaney, 2013; Mak & Kennedy, 2012; Schlegelmilch & Thomas, 2011).

<http://austrianstudiesjournal.org/>

This student profile has forced attention towards the curriculum and learning outcomes for the globalised professional labour market and teaching environment, which embrace increased intercultural skills development for graduates. This is not confined to the Australian setting (c.f. Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002; Schlegelmilch & Thomas, 2011).

There is growing recognition that traditional approaches to curriculum, teaching and learning may not be addressing needs of the increasingly diverse student population, or satisfying the demands of graduate employers (Australian Business Deans Council, 2014; Dyllick, 2016). The changing student population necessitates new approaches to both curriculum design and teaching that specifically aim to scaffold learning by drawing on and building student capability. Academics teaching in postgraduate management education programs need to acknowledge the changing student demographic and harness this opportunity.

International and domestic students alike are understood to benefit from opportunities which encourage development of generic business attributes, support students to think globally, and value cultural and linguistic diversity (Green & Whitsed, 2016; Leask, 2008). Learning environments that foster peer interaction can better prepare students for globalised workplaces. One way to draw on student diversity is to focus on peer interactions within a structured learning environment. Enhancing interaction between students in an on-campus class is, however, challenging (Harrison, 2016; Kimmel & Volet, 2012). The *Interaction for Learning Framework* (ILF) developed in Australia by Arkoudis et al., (2010) is intended to help academics structure learning environments which increase interaction between students.

Although the ILF provides a basis for planning innovations in learning environments to increase peer interaction, there is a need for evaluation of the implementation of this framework. In addition to "raising the awareness of academics about the possibilities for improvement" (Arkoudis, et al., 2013, p. 233), it is necessary to provide evidence of intervention outcomes. One appraisal tool in business (see Han & Boulay, 2013), and recently employed in higher education (Praslova, 2010; Taras, et al., 2013), is the Kirkpatrick four level training evaluation model (Kirkpatrick & Kayser-Kirkpatrick, 2014).

This paper is an account of the evaluation of the curriculum innovation grounded in the ILF. We examine the efficacy of the popular four level training evaluation framework - the Kirkpatrick model - as a way to appraise the outcomes of ILF-based curriculum interventions.

#### **The higher education context: A changing landscape for management educators**

Providing students with opportunities to develop interpersonal and intercultural communication competencies is increasingly viewed as a key university responsibility in the development of work-ready graduates. There is a need to close the gap between theory and practice in curriculum, and for pedagogy aimed at developing interpersonal skills including intercultural understanding (Randolph, 2011). Busch (2009) and Caruana and Ploner (2010) argue these learning outcomes

are central to realising individual employment ambitions and workplace integration. In the changing global environment, education that supports the development of students' global perspectives, learning, interpersonal, and intercultural competencies is a priority (Chaney, 2013). In this global environment, managers who can construct knowledge with alternate cultural viewpoints, demonstrate high level interpersonal and communication skills, and work productively and collaboratively, are considered vital to the future of management (Australian Business Deans Council, 2014; Dyllick, 2016).

Amoroso, Loyd and Hoobler (2010, p. 796) argued, "management educators play an important role in exposing students to many diversity related topics". They maintained that strategic pedagogical approaches need to be employed to mitigate the problems arising from common diversity discussion-based practices, which have a tendency to reinforce status group boundaries and affirm stereotypical beliefs. As Amoroso et al. (2010) suggested, structuring activities which promote new allegiances and social identities, and undermine stereotyping, are an important part of the educators' role.

There has been increased attention PAID TO the 'internationalisation of the curriculum' as a way of developing global perspectives (Leask, 2008; Leask & Beelen, 2009; Wamboye, Adekola & Sergi, 2016). Across this literature, three essential educational requirements are emphasised. First, learning environments need to be structured to provide students with opportunities to develop intercultural competencies as a feature of the formal curriculum (Leask, 2008; Leask & Beelen, 2009). While this goal has been characterised as an impossible 'ideal' (DeVita, 2007), it is nevertheless an important aspirational goal, particularly as it relates to graduate capability and learning outcomes (Caruana & Ploner, 2010). Second, learning environments need to facilitate the development of generic graduate attributes such as: thinking globally; appreciating multicultural diversity; valuing cultural and linguistic diversity (Leask, 2008); cultural intelligence (Shaw, 2004); and, specific disciplinary knowledge. Third, learning environments need to encourage and support peer interactions (Arkoudis, et al., 2010; Schullery & Schullery, 2006) and productive engagement in teams (Volet & Mansfield, 2006; Kimmel & Volet, 2012).

Denson and Bowman (2011) suggest it is not only the quantity, but the quality of interactions between culturally diverse peers, that is important for the development of intercultural communication competencies (see also Harrison, 2016). Kimmel and Volet (2012, p. 449) observed, "despite all the potential beneficial effects of group work in academic learning, there is a parallel, strong and converging body of literature documenting students' negative perceptions... and experiences of socio-emotional as well as socio-cultural challenges". Osmond and Roed (2010) concluded that most students tend to prefer homogenous groups with similar backgrounds, shared languages or shared difficulties with English as a second language. The tendency for students to avoid interacting with others they perceive to be dissimilar to themselves (Harrison & Peacock, 2010), provides a significant rationale for curriculum innovation that encourages engagement between all students.

According to Arkoudis et al., (2010, p. 26), "internationalising teaching and learning strategies, including increasing interaction between domestic and international students" is a key challenge. The degree to which educators purposefully manage interpersonal and intercultural interaction is still relatively unknown. Likewise, how students respond when these dimensions of learning are structured into the learning environment is also largely under-researched. Research to evaluate resources intended to innovate curricula to support such learning outcomes is equally rare (Green & Whitsed, 2013).

Arkoudis et al., (2010) stressed it is false to assume that productive peer interaction will spontaneously occur in classes without structured interventions. Encouraging structured peer interaction in learning environments is viewed as a potential means to engender productive outcomes. This is the focus of the *Interaction for Learning Framework* (ILF).

### **The *Interaction for Learning Framework* (ILF)**

Premised on previous research that clearly showed student reluctance to mix outside their social or cultural groups (e.g. Leask, 2009; Prescott & Hellstyn, 2005), the ILF emphasises that the management of interaction between students is an integral part of the facilitation of learning (Arkoudis, et al., 2013). The six-dimensional framework is intended to support the development of a structured approach incorporating interventions aimed at increasing the level and depth of peer interaction and fostering communities of learning (Arkoudis, et al., 2010; Arkoudis, et al., 2013). The six dimensions focus on:

- incorporating peer interaction activities into the design of the unit
- using teaching strategies to facilitate meaningful, structured interactions with peers from different backgrounds in the first few weeks of class
- informing students about the expectations and benefits of working across different cultural groups for their learning
  - encouraging students to engage with the subject content through peer learning activities
  - encouraging students to engage, to critically reflect on the learning process itself
  - encouraging students to move across cultural contexts, to collectively form a community of learners.

The application of the framework has not yet resulted in a plethora of published work, however there is some evidence that the model has been trialled across a range of subjects including organisational behaviour (Paull, 2016) anatomy (Etherington, 2014) and in mathematics, history and media (Whitsed, 2010).

Although the framework has many strengths to recommend it, the ILF does not provide a process by which academics can easily evaluate the outcomes produced by its implementation. Evaluation of teaching interventions cannot easily be parsed, nor can academic staff, with increasing time constraints, afford to spend hours conducting in-depth evaluation of innovative approaches to teaching. We present the Kirkpatrick model as a simple, time efficient way to evaluate the outcomes of ILF-based curriculum interventions.

### **The Kirkpatrick model**

Kirkpatrick first proposed his approach to evaluation in 1959. The model was extensively reviewed as part of its semi-centennial celebrations (Kirkpatrick & Kayser-Kirkpatrick, 2014). It consists of four levels of evaluation designed to appraise workplace training (Table 1). There is evidence of a propensity towards limiting evaluation to the lower levels of the model (Steele, et al., 2016). The model is an established and recognised approach which provides a structure and does not require an inordinate amount of time to administer. Although the approach has its critics, and is not the only way to evaluate interventions, the contribution of the Kirkpatrick model in organisations "cannot be underestimated" (Saks & Haccoun, 2010, p. 332), given its wide use in industry for over 55 years (e.g. health, see Ameh & van den Broek, 2016; hospitality, see Ho, Arendt, Zheng & Hanisch, 2016).

The Kirkpatrick model has been employed in higher education settings with varying opinions about its efficacy (see Abdulghani, et al., 2014; Arthur, Tubre, Paul & Edens, 2003; Chang & Chen, 2014; Collins, Smith & Hannon, 2006; Praslova, 2010; Yardley & Dornan, 2012). Although Saks and Haccoun (2010) concluded it may not be well-suited to formative evaluation, and Holton (1996) and Alliger, Tannenbaum, Bennett, Traver & Shotland (1997) have criticised the hierarchical nature of the approach, these conclusions have not been further substantiated, nor had an impact on its application in industry. Its simplicity and focus, and its systematic approach, mean that it remains one of the most widely used tools for evaluation of workplace training. It therefore provides a useful starting point for evaluation of curriculum innovations such as those proposed by the ILF. It is also likely to be familiar to management academics. What follows is a description of an ILF-based curriculum innovation in a postgraduate coursework business unit.

The unit was taught by the first author (A1) who implemented the ILF. The second author (A2) took on the role of critical friend during implementation, and the third author (A3) provided a retrospective outsider view offering further insights at the time of data interpretation (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989).

The compulsory postgraduate unit, on organisational behaviour, has a diverse student cohort. In this particular semester, students (N=45) ranged in age from early 20s to 65; and from limited work experience to many years in a range of industries (e.g. health, teaching, mining, public and non-profit sectors) and professions (e.g. accounting, hospitality, human resources and marketing). This diversity extended to ethnic backgrounds, with students from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the United States. The domestic student cohort, many of whom had ethnic origins similar to the international students, included students from regional Western Australia and across the nation. All students were faced with challenges in managing their studies as part of their busy lives.

Supporting the development of students' intercultural communication competencies was a key learning objective in the unit. Students were required to self-select into groups to complete an assignment that extended over a number of weeks. Each group was required to develop a behavioural contract to establish their ground rules for working together. Students were also required to keep a critical

incident log to document their group's evolution. A key element of the group assignment was the allocation of in-class time for students to work together. This allowed monitoring of groups and feedback provision by A1.

Observations by A1 over a number of semesters, however, had suggested the degree of interaction between the students in group projects and during class time was less than optimal, despite the interactive learning and group activities in place. For example, students repeatedly sat in the same location and in the same homogeneous groups even though diversity was promoted as an ideal to be achieved in the group formation. Therefore, as a move to address this tendency, a series of interventions were undertaken using the ILF as a guide.

Adopting the ILF was intended to increase interactions between all students in the class. The aims were to enhance cross cultural communication, group interaction, communication and learning about diversity; and to help create social connections between students to enable peer support and reduce some of the barriers which are known to exist between domestic and international students.

To address the first two dimensions of the ILF - planning interactions and creating environments for interaction, A1 integrated the following into the unit's design and delivery.

- Briefing at semester commencement on the need for diversity in assignment groups, and discussion of the value of diversity for assignment outcomes was increased. The need for graduates to be competent in a diverse work environment was discussed as a key reason for the emphasis on diversity in the unit.

- Exercises and activities to explore and gain understanding of the less obvious elements of diversity, such as work and life experience, were used to increase interactions between students before groups formed. This expanded briefing included content about cultural influences on group and task behaviour, and was delivered a week earlier than usual.

- In the first class, A1 introduced an additional 'out of your seat' icebreaker exercise. The icebreaker was designed such that students who had been resident a short period (hours/days) were interacting incrementally with students who had been resident longer (weeks/months/years); students who had been resident longer interacted with those born in Australia. This structure was deliberate and considered. Past experience had suggested that lower empathy outcomes resulted when newly arrived students were required to interact with long-term residents in the initial stages of the unit.

Dimension three of the ILF relates to scene-setting. A1 led discussions on stereotypes, and preconceived ideas about different cultural groups were identified; highlighting the use and misuse of perceptive shortcuts. The discussions also included interaction with core examinable text and course materials adding an incentive for student engagement. Students were provided opportunities to gain understanding of the value of peer interaction and provided instruction and time for establishing ground rules and expectations for learning tasks, in this case the group assignment. In the development of the group behavioural contract students were

asked to determine mechanisms for dispute resolution, and establish expectations for individual contributions.

Dimension four of the ILF relates to subject knowledge. The unit included topics such as perception, group dynamics, cultural differences and diversity. Class exercises were designed to specifically illustrate these and capitalise on student diversity. These included: a game of 'whispers' in the communication session; student conflict scenario discussions in the conflict session; and a blindfold exercise in the leadership session.

Training tools (e.g. playing cards) were used to randomly assign students to activity groups. In most sessions, groups formed by randomisation were required to discuss short cases, ethical dilemmas or management-practice scenarios drawing on their own experiences and understandings, in addition to the course materials.

#### **Applying the Kirkpatrick model**

A number of data collection and interpretation strategies were used in applying the Kirkpatrick model. A1 and A2 maintained a critical dialogue over the semester. A1 kept a record of observations and logged activities as the semester progressed to enable contemporaneous responses to be recorded, and decision making processes to be captured. Each student group was required to submit a critical incident log of their activities, and give a presentation to the class as part of their assessment. Both A1 and A2 attended the presentations.

As the semester ended, the students were invited by A2 to provide anonymous written responses to questions about their experiences. As part of the consent process, students were assured that comments would not be revealed to either A1 or A2 until all grades were finalised. In total 42 out of 45 students participated. The questions focused on student perceptions of assignment work in diverse groups; the manner in which groups were formed; general observations about other class exercises; and whether they maintained contact with each other outside class. Students rated whether they would be more inclined to participate in diverse group work in the future as a direct outcome of their experiences in the unit via a five point rating scale. Several students chose to add additional feedback comments.

The multi-source data allowed for evaluation according to the Kirkpatrick levels:

- responses to the questions posed by A2 provided reaction level data (Level 1), and information for the behavioural level evaluation (Level 3);
- observations and records made by A1 as the semester progressed provided data on behaviours of students (Level 3); and
- group critical incident logs, and student presentations provided data on learning (Level 2) and on behaviours (Level 3).

#### **Outcomes of the implementation using the Kirkpatrick evaluation**

We made the following observations according to the Kirkpatrick levels of evaluation.

##### **Level 1: Reaction**

In the feedback process students were asked to provide their views on the pros and cons of the methods employed to increase interaction in the unit. They

were also asked about their willingness to participate again in a group assessment if the task were similarly structured and managed, on a 1 to 5 point Likert scale with 1 being absolute agreement, and 5 being 'never again'. Of the 42 students (N=42) who provided a response, only 2 indicated 'never again' with 13 indicating absolute willingness. Figure 1 shows the spread of responses.

Student willingness to participate in similar group assignments

Feedback was generally positive. Those who overcame their initial reservations acknowledged the value of working in groups; and of interaction across a broad range of activities. Some of their comments are reflected in the frequency word pictures (see Bock, 2009) in relation to the positives (Figure 2) and negatives (Figure 3) of the methods employed.

A1 observed there were several students who were apathetic towards being randomly assigned to groups for in-class exercises, and a few initially declined to participate. More participated as the semester progressed, and tended to withdraw only from activities which required them to leave their seat, but not from small 'sit-down' discussion type activities.

#### **Level 2: Learning**

Content of the group presentations suggested that many students had developed an understanding of the value of diverse perspectives. One student commented on the "good mix of different cultures and languages" identifying that it was "good to hear what others think or have things explained in another way other than by the lecturer". A1 observed that this appreciation of diversity was greater than in the discussion of diversity at the commencement of the unit. The group critical incident logs indicated that students had actively negotiated their way through differences attributable to diversity. While this is a positive outcome, it did become apparent that skills associated with reflection, evaluation and collective development of understanding needed to be included in the skill development phase of the unit in future offerings. The use of reflections as part of instructional strategies has been well documented (see Rogers, 2001).

#### **Level 3: Behaviour**

At the behavioural level, student responses indicated a limited range of social contact was occurring outside classes due to a range of factors. One student observed "I have no contact outside class due to work and family commitments". Approximately six months later, A1 observed that numerous students appeared to have maintained contact with each other in other units despite initially indicating this was unlikely. Evidence of this included a group who attended the graduation of the first of their cohort to complete their studies. The degree of interaction observed as occurring between these students suggests that their participation in the unit may have encouraged positive sentiments. The longevity of this behavioural outcome merits further investigation.

#### **Level 4: Results**

In order to determine if the key ILF expectations were fulfilled, we make the following observations.

Increased interaction between all students

Overall, student responses suggested an appreciation of the importance of being able to work in diverse groups and across cultural boundaries. The view was expressed by many students that this reflected the workplace as they perceived and experienced it.

The tendency among many students to shy away from interaction with others they perceive to be dissimilar, provides a significant rationale for curriculum innovation that encourages intra-cohort engagement. While it was not clear that this form of reluctance occurred in the unit, the randomised assignment to activity groups encouraged interaction where this might not otherwise have occurred.

Responses regarding group formation also tended to be positive, indicating high satisfaction levels with the manner in which groups were organised. One student remarked, "The heterogeneous mix of ethnicity and languages also contributed to the positives of group work."

Some students expressed reservations about group formation, and one likened it to a game of chance. Volet and Mansfield (2006, p. 342) observed that "even minimal levels of cooperation can present motivational and socio-emotional challenges, raising concerns about students' readiness for teamwork". They further observe that numerous empirical studies within the social-cognitive perspective, link student motivational factors to personal goals and "perceptions of appraisals of group assignments" (p. 342). It is possible that because marks had been allocated for the group assessment at the time of data collection, these may have influenced some of these responses.

As expected, not all responses were positive and several students were critical concerning the value to them of working in diverse groups. For instance a few students expressed the view that the activities were not appropriate use of their time. The receipt of negative criticisms suggests some students felt sufficiently empowered to offer this feedback. As with any survey, we are mindful of potential response bias with these and other results presented.

#### *Enhanced*

#### *learning*

Student motivation to engage in a learning task is indexed to their appraisals of task valence, such as the value of group work. Therefore, it is necessary for the task to be recognised by students as important and that it be 'worth doing' (Leask & Carroll, 2011, p. 655). In addition to the intrinsic valence, the assessment was worth 30% of the final grade for the unit. Students were required to participate in small groups to complete some assigned learning tasks. The majority of students maintained that participating in the group assignment was overall a positive experience because of the insights, perceptions and skills afforded them by working within a diverse group.

Positive feedback was also received about the in-class activities designed to promote interaction beyond the assignment groups. The majority view was that these activities were enjoyable and could be employed in other units. Some of the feedback indicated that students understood the value of interaction for learning.

Collaboration [in the] groups in class is fantastic to meet students and discuss the course content. It helps the understanding of the content and gives you confidence that your opinions are valid and relevant.

Students were asked to rate their willingness to participate again in a group assessment if the task were similarly structured and managed. Two students indicated 'never again' with 13 indicating absolute willingness. The results indicate that the students endorsed the manner in which the assessment tasks and other activities were constructed and contributed to engendering positive attitudes towards working with others. Research suggests that curriculum innovation which promotes team-work and team interaction increases learning opportunities for students (Volet & Mansfield, 2006; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Shaw, 2004). No solid conclusions or causal links can be established here, but responses are encouraging. Further, this suggests a continuation of the approaches derived from the ILF is merited.

A1 observed critical incidents suggesting that, for several students, reflecting on the learning experiences and utilising diversity as a means to improve learning, was challenging. This relates to dimensions five and six of the ILF, focusing on developing reflexive processes and fostering communities of learners (Arkoudis, et al., 2010, p. 6). For example, A1 recorded the following:

One group of students did not actively follow the reformation of groups, although they had recruited an individual who appeared to be a 'token' international student... At times they manipulated the ...activities... so that they did not have to mix with other students. ...they appeared to be aimed at alienating the student who was noticeably non-Caucasian...

While students express an appreciation for the value of group work, without appropriate support and interventions, groups may become dysfunctional (Volet & Mansfield, 2006). In this unit, one group allowed itself to be dominated by a single student. A second group comprised of four very new international students and one domestic student, struggled to allocate tasks, and complete the assignment when the domestic student withdrew from the unit. Notable in both instances, and only evident on the evening of the group presentations, was the reluctance of the groups to seek early assistance. A system for early notification should be included in future group behavioural contracts. Despite the challenges encountered, students felt they developed skills which they may not have if they stayed within their own spheres.

#### **Creating social connections**

Responses to the question concerning contact with peers outside of class time were

mixed. They ranged from only meeting for group assignment purposes to high levels of contact. Students cited lack of time as the reason for not mixing with their peers.

Yes I have contact outside the unit but only within the university. I did not go out with them but not because I did not like them. Everyone was just busy. We spoke about it.

Quite a number of students indicated that while they did contact each other outside class time, this was often via email or social media, and mainly for their studies. One student observed:

For the group meeting we meet up weekly. I met up with one member of the group with regards to study and non-study... the whole team is more like friends towards the completion of the group work and we keep in touch via email and social network.

For a few students, the group experience was ultimately very rewarding and they reported forming friendships. After this data was collected, students from this unit were observed working collaboratively on exam preparation. As they were no longer required to be working together, the continuation of intra-unit contact across cultures is encouraging.

#### **Learnings, limitations and implications**

The ILF offered a structured and considered approach aimed at increasing the level and depth of peer interaction and fostering communities of learning. The Kirkpatrick model provided a useful tool to evaluate this curriculum innovation. A level of increased interaction between all students was identified; student learning about the value of diversity, group and cross-cultural interaction was evident; and greater social connections across groups were reported. These outcomes are useable, as they allow identification of the strengths and challenges of the ILF, and provide direction for further interventions, specifically highlighting future refinements.

The Kirkpatrick model offered a simple approach for explanation to diverse audiences, and was relatively easy to implement. It enabled advance preparation, and the development of simple structures to obtain data from students expeditiously, without diverting them from their learning. Similar to challenges experienced in the workplace (Kennedy, Chyung, Winiecki & Brinkerhoff, 2014), where evaluating the learning which has been transferred to other settings, and the return on expectations are difficult, educators need to consider the proxies which might be employed to ascertain level three and level four evaluations.

A comprehensive evaluation via a process of pre-post experimental design with a longitudinal perspective past the unit's conclusion would offer data suitable for a more in-depth analysis of the intervention. The Kirkpatrick model can be applied for this more complex evaluation with further thought and preparation. As with workplace evaluation, more complex approaches would require additional support and infrastructure (Kennedy, Chyung, Winiecki & Brinkerhoff, 2014), particularly for the level three and level four outcomes. Finally, it is important to recognise that the model would need to be adapted to suit the particular curriculum intervention being evaluated, and the circumstances in which the evaluation is taking place.

The application of the Kirkpatrick four level model in a single semester to a single cohort means that only moderatum generalisations can be offered (Williams, 2000). In subsequent semesters, modifications to some of the activities were made, based on student feedback, but the overall interactive format of classes was contin-

ued. These subsequent iterations were not subject to any ethics approval, and therefore are not reported here. In the semester under review, however, the Kirkpatrick four level model as a way of evaluating the application of the *Interaction for Learning Framework* has produced positive outcomes in a time efficient manner for both educators and students. Ongoing evaluation of the application of the Kirkpatrick model is recommended as the fit with other curriculum innovations is not fully known.

Teachers and researchers are interested in identifying what constitutes engaging educational experiences as they strive to deliver effective teaching and learning to diverse young adolescent learners in a multitude of settings (Carneiro & Draxler, 2008). The IMC Sky High! program is a project of the International Research Centre for Youth Futures at the University of Technology Sydney that focuses on increasing student aspiration and engagement. The program offers a series of out-of-school, curriculum-based workshops to disengaged learners and learners with low confidence, to generate experiences of success and further stimulate students' learning at school. Some students find the program motivates them to consider tertiary study but for others the more immediate focus is on the benefits of attendance at and engagement with secondary school.

Of particular interest to us are observations of the role physical involvement plays in making learning activities engaging for students identified by their teachers as disengaged from school and learning. The themes we consider are that of the listening and speaking body, the disrupted and the caring body. This cluster of themes was selected following observations of two Sky High events attended by students in the Year 7 2016 cohort. We employ ethnographic principles to notice how students become caught up or physically involved in the activities. We record and reflect on our observations to promote empathetic understanding and increased sensitivity to participating students' learning needs. This method enables us to consider practice from a phenomenological view which depicts the body as a vibrant site of communication, of being and of knowing (Grosz, 1994). This stance has the potential to help practitioners become more open to and aware of the body's possibilities to enhance learning engagement. We conclude by suggesting how educators can respond more intentionally and attentively to the significance of the body to create meaningful encounters for learners.

#### **Socioeconomic context of the *IMC Sky High!* program**

The Sky High program endeavours to play a part in increasing, in the critical middle years phase (Bahr, 2005), students' motivation to engage in school by encouraging students to strive towards further study and desired future employment. One day workshops which connect with Year 7-8 curriculum (e.g. science, history, PDHPE, the arts) and tertiary pathways (e.g. science, law, health, communications) are arranged in a yearly program which runs for two consecutive years. On a practical level, the program plays a role in making trips from the suburbs to the city, to the university campus and nearby cultural institutions a more familiar experience so students feel more confident about considering bolder futures in terms of employment and study. The program is funded by a private organisation with philanthrop-

ic goals to build stronger communities. It has worked with over 250 Year 7 and 8 (age 12-14) students since 2012. In 2016, nine participating state high schools each selected twelve students to attend workshops held approximately once a month during the school day. The students selected were those teachers felt would benefit from moving beyond their classroom and school, beyond their physical locale and beyond their daily expectations and experiences of curriculum and pedagogy. In making their selection, teachers recognised factors which compromise success at school including challenging home lives, lack of opportunities due to poverty, poor community experiences, difficulties adjusting to secondary school, and high but untapped academic potential. Students may also be disadvantaged due to where they are growing up, including areas geographically isolated from public transport.

The participating schools' overall linguistic and cultural profiles are notably diverse; this point is reflected in the identities of the students involved. Of the nine participating high schools in 2016, on average 74% of students at these schools speak languages other than English (LOTE) at home (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2016). Two schools report LOTE backgrounds as high as 96%. Most of the schools have small percentages of indigenous students (e.g. 1% to 6%) but one school celebrates 12% of their population coming from an indigenous background. The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) for these schools range from 870 to 939, with the average at 912. The average national value is 1000, which places the participating schools below the national average value. Representative of the demography of south-western Sydney, there are many students from Arabic speaking backgrounds and of the Muslim faith. There are also students from refugee backgrounds whose teachers feel will benefit from 'viable connections between classroom learning and outside uses of literacy' (Naidoo, 2010, pp. 53-54); a feature of Sky High events. In the current social context, some elements of culture and religion can make engagement in public, community life and schooling more difficult for some students. One of the participating teachers reported that her female Muslim students were reluctant to leave the school's suburb as girls had experienced abuse when wearing the hijab in public. Teachers accompany their students to each workshop and become an important bridge as students physically and metaphorically transfer learning between school and *Sky High*.

#### **Futures, career choices and aspirations**

Exploring engagement through embodiment in this multicultural, multilingual and low socioeconomic context is spurred by the commitment to develop a program that makes an early difference to students' effective engagement in secondary schooling. At the end of their second year of high school, students have the opportunity to select electives that personalise their course of study and, in Year 11, assuming they remain at school, students will select again. Recognising these important phases, the Sky High program aims to raise students' expectations of themselves by offering rigorous and creative intellectual and social experiences which continually broach new and more challenging topic areas in an out-of-school setting.

Research in the career education field around the development of occupational aspirations (Gottfredson, 1981) suggests value in making an impact when young adolescents are refining perceptions of their ability and aligning these with perceived status levels of occupations. The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* program, another program that supports children from low socioeconomic families and communities, stresses the importance of making an early impact on students' self-perceptions of their ability in order to raise students' expectations of what they can achieve in life. The *Learning for Life* research indicates respondents (Year 8 and 9 students, aged 13-15) had largely already decided on key elements of their future pathways, based on an intersection of perceived ability and gender, and that low perceptions of one's ability to achieve at school were more likely to contribute to plans not involving post-school education, apprenticeships or traineeships (Beavis, Curtis & Curtis, 2005). This finding is suggestive of experiences of students from more marginal cultural and economic groups. Lingard and Keddle (2013, p. 427) consider that opportunities to maximise the impact of school through high levels of intellectual rigour can contribute to more 'equitable outcomes for marginalised students', which is a goal of *Sky High*.

By approaching a commitment to equity through research into embodied practice, our paper positions disadvantaged, middle years students as successful learners, and learners and leaders of great potential. This stance contributes to Nancy Fraser's (1997, p. 16) 'redistribution-recognition dilemma,' which is concerned with recognising the contributions and potential of people 'subject to both cultural injustice and economic injustice'. The vast majority of children participating in *Sky High* experience elements of cultural exclusion and economic deprivation owing to backgrounds outlined above. Programs such as *Sky High* have important roles to play in 'mobilising spaces of possibility and hope' (Keddle, 2012, p. 2) through translation of theory into practice.

### **The educational body in literature**

The following section considers literature on how the body becomes 'caught up' in learning activities. The body can provide important insights into how students relate to their learning contexts and how educators can effectively design learning to engage diverse learners. The body, however, has been devalued as it is considered by some approaches to be a less reliable and tangible means of knowing. This perception is derived from Cartesian dualism, which views the body as being separate from and inferior to the intellect. Tangenberg and Kemp (2002, p.11) relayed this view of the body as, '... [being too] personal, immediate and messy' to be considered a site of 'acceptable knowledge'. While the mind is conferred a superior status due to its capacity to reason, the body has been discredited as a limiting, unruly or a distracting factor that needs to be overcome or tamed by the mind (Bordo, 1998; Freedman & Holmes, 2012; McWilliam, 1995). In reaction to this negative and limiting view, phenomenologists have argued that the body is the most accurate basis for knowing, as individuals use their bodily senses to participate in and know about the world. Using phenomenological approaches, writers (see Campbell, 2009; Steihaug & Malterud, 2008; Palmer, 1989) assert that bodily knowing is free

from the interference of the mind's filtering process and acts as the source of all other forms of knowing, as logical reasoning and conceptualisations are derived from our bodily experiences. Lakoff and Johnson (1999, p.17) similarly conclude that 'our sense of what is real begins with and depends crucially on our bodies'. Observing embodied practice consequently acknowledges that we come to know through the body as our experience and subsequent emotions are interpreted through the body (Matthews, 1998; Michelson, 1998).

Bodily knowing is believed to lie at the heart of the aesthetic experience, which provides a point of connection for the events described in this paper. We think 'with and through' the body in our practice as bodily knowing is a 'primary mode of being and becoming' (Green & Hopwood, 2016, p.18). Such knowing is demonstrated through the ways that the body listens and responds to its context. This is particularly evident during out of school, excursion type experiences, which typically have been seen to evoke high levels of bodily engagement, where a fusion of the whole being can cultivate a 'refined and intensified form of experience' (Hubard, 2007, p.3). Grosz (1994) describes this intensified experience through the 'lived' and 'inscribed' body. The lived body alludes to the body as it is physically experienced or the way in which it interacts with the world on an everyday level through our bodily senses, such as taste, touch, smell and sight (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). This aligns with the phenomenologist view described above. Following our observations of students engaged in learning activities, we gain insights into students' intentionality through how they listen to and communicate with the world by rising up to meet it rather than passively inhabiting it. The focus of this article is on the lived body of the participants rather than the inscribed body, which conveys how the body delivers specific messages of power and culture through identifying with a particular culture, gender or social status. Although we acknowledge the ways disadvantage can be 'written on' and 'read from' bodies to constrict young people's learning experiences, our objective is to see how bodies engage with these experiences.

One very accessible means of exploring embodiment and engagement is through observing bodily movement. Farnell and Varela (2008) refer to the 'moving body, the doing itself' and the primacy of embodied meaning making by describing how we make sense of experiences, by being engaged through the 'modalities of taste, hearing, touch, pain, smell, sight and kinesthesia' (p.216). Deleuze (1988) similarly highlights this connection by explaining how the process of becoming lies in the body's ability to affect and be affected. The physical extension of bodies is considered to be 'matter-energy' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.408). Bodily movement is closely related to the affective body or engagement as the body is perceived as something that moves and feels (Massumi, 2002). Coffey (2012) explains the Deleuzian concepts of affect by describing how bodies in motion are positive and affirmative and, 'defined by their relations and affects, opening up or closing down possibilities ... in continuous movement and negotiation' (p. 16). As bodies are considered to be feeling, interacting, becoming and moving in practice or performance, they can be understood as 'intensities, rather than entities' (Coffey, 2012, p. 7). As

we focus on the body, we observe the ways that deep levels of immersion, of being lost in the movement of one's body, can become an affective and aesthetic process. This is where individuals lose self-consciousness and experience positive emotion as they become engaged through their bodies. Our responses to observations of the students illustrates how bodies can become 'caught up' in an activity through voice, eyes, proximity and movement.

The literature also indicates how practitioners can use their bodies to demonstrate care by actively involving students in learning. In our program we are interested to see how facilitators manipulate their bodies to dynamically engage students. Positions of caring have been commonly associated with responsiveness, as individuals actively respond to the needs of others to form 'encounters' with the ones cared for (Noddings, 1992). These gestures are believed to establish intimacy as the individual is present with his or her body (Uitto & Syrjälä, 2008). For instance, gestures that embody physical closeness, such as crouching next to a child, have been construed as more ethical and non-intimidating gestures of care, as teachers speak to students on their level (Vick & Martinez, 2011). Unethical presentations of teachers' bodily positions, however, include physical positions that mark out distinction and distance, such as standing away from students and using a loud authoritative voice to command attention (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Vick & Martinez, 2011). Through our events we aim to be attentive to how facilitators use their bodies to engage students in powerful and meaningful learning encounters.

### **Researching music and museum workshops**

The workshops which produced the observations for this paper include a visit to the Australian National Maritime Museum and a classical music workshop. These were selected for analysis due to the highly sensory nature of the learning experiences provided. Each workshop involved the participation of around seventy Year 7 (age 13) students. The music workshop was one of the first workshops held during the year, when students had been newly introduced to the program. The museum visit took place midway through, when students felt more at ease with the program and one another.

The ethnographic method of collecting data through observing and recording helped us note the emotions and understandings of which students may have been unaware had they been given a survey or interviewed. This was both an important and useful strategy as prior experiences of conducting written surveys and face to face interviews appeared limited by students' self-consciousness in articulating their views. Utilising an observational method is affirmed by others who research children and young adolescents as observation may free up alternate modes of understanding (Tisdall, Davis & Gallagher, 2009). The ethnographic method was used to observe the body as 'the active and intentional reaching out from its physical existence' (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003, p. 697). In using this approach, we were also conscious of the embodied nature of our observations, which Dixon and Senior (2011) allude to by defining seeing as, 'the involvement of reading with body and emotion' (p.475). Our descriptions of student and facilitators' bodies pro-

vides glimpses of the engaged body, which are not always easily noticed or visible within the multitude of encounters within events.

The music workshop was facilitated by a music education lecturer from the university and two professional classical musicians, a cellist and viola player. It was held over three hours in a media studio with tiered seating, a lighting rig and a large black curtain, denoting audience and stage areas. In preparing the workshop, the music lecturer created a range of music-making and movement opportunities and provided students with a large collection of percussion instruments, including many Asian and Middle Eastern instruments. These were organised in small boxes and arranged along one wall of the stage area. The professional musicians brought their glossy and impressive instruments, which were tuned and waiting in a side room before being brought out for the concert after the lunch break. Although classical music was noted as a largely unfamiliar experience for these students by their teachers, the event addressed syllabus requirements of listening experiences and opportunities to recognise Australia's musical culture (Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards NSW, 2007). Music provides an ideal context for investigation of the concerns of this paper as it creates a multi-sensory experience of hearing sound, seeing movement and encouraging kinaesthetic responses to a variety of stimuli (Custodero, 2002).

The one day museum visit promoted a similarly sensory learning experience as students physically encountered a collection of artefacts representative of Australia's maritime heritage. A small number of students indicated that they had visited the museum in primary school but few had attended since that time. Students were divided into two groups and were taken on tour by museum guides through a recently decommissioned warship and submarine, a replica of explorer James Cook's boat, *The Endeavour*, and through the indoor galleries with stories of immigration and Antarctic exploration. The two of us wrote observations of these events in our notebooks. We positioned ourselves on the periphery of the event, such as in the darkened audience seats in the music studio and on the edge of the group when touring the museum. We separately noted what we felt to be the most salient, interesting or curious observations.

The events under examination had not been nominated in advance as there was no intentional plan to research or write about the body. Presentations of the body became increasingly evident, however, when field notes were shared in post-workshop debriefing sessions with the larger team. Our notes made frequent and detailed mention of the movement of bodies through the spaces and how students' bodies were positioned in relation to the learning activity and to each other. We recognised a mutual sensitivity to embodied practice and became more alert to the recording of interactions which may have previously passed unremarked had we not paused to share and reflect on our observations. This allowed us to draw on Taylor's (2013, p. 698) recognition of 'that which is resolutely mundane within everyday pedagogic practice' by giving attention to what could otherwise have been recorded as inattention, chatting with friends, ignoring the tutor, being shy etc. We concur with Taylor (2013, p. 698) that giving attention to what may pass as unre-

markable classroom interactions can heighten educators' awareness of the potent 'constellation of human-nonhuman agencies, forces and events'.

Our investigations take an ethnographic approach revolving around the act of being, seeing and writing (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995). As observers who are also part of the program's organising team, we aim to identify factors of our program that are efficacious and potentially transferable to other programs, as well as to school. An ethnographic approach also allows for insights revealing the researchers' perspectives and experiences, which can result in more educators raising their voices to make sense of the complexities of student engagement (Harris, 2011).

### **Findings from observations**

The following sections share insights into two workshops generated from our observation journals. Selections, which we consider to be the most insightful into the theme of embodiment, have been organised into three sections around the sub-headings: the embodiment of listening and speaking, learning as the disrupted body, and the caring body. The first two sections, the embodiment of listening and speaking, and learning as the disrupted body, seek to convey the complex nature of embodied nature that characterises authentic learning and student engagement. The third section, the caring body, highlights the significance of learning relationships.

#### **The embodiment of listening and speaking**

The body, in its many differing forms and expressions, plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to experience the world. The aforementioned literature has described the body as an active entity that rises up to interact with the world. Grosz (1994, p.xi) draws attention to this active body, stating 'bodies are not inert, they function interactively and productively. They act and react'. The students' bodies in Sky High interact by 'speaking to' other bodies through listening, observing and responding; however, it becomes apparent that students are not always at ease in or compliant with requests in these areas. The music event tutor frequently drew students' attention to the communicating body. In one instance she asked students to carefully watch the two musicians communicate as they played:

The tutor shared a secret that the musicians are in fact talking to us as they play. She tells us to watch for it and indeed we are able to see them looking at each other as they play, moving their bodies rhythmically and in tune with each other. (Joanne, music event, April 2016)

The tutor drew our attention to the musicians' physical dialogue, where their communication appeared instinctive as they moved harmoniously to the music and each other's bodies. The viola player began dancing while the cellist replied with equally quick and agile responses on his instrument:

Smil[ing] and jump[ing] as the last note vibrated from his bow and the cellist, although seated, used his fingertips, arms, back and head, in smooth movement, to achieve momentum and make his instrument sing. (Sarah, music event, April 2016)

Echoing the musicians, the facilitator challenged students to communicate through their bodies by modelling embodied practice (Uitto & Syrjälä, 2008). She demonstrated ways to inhabit the body as she led students through an exercise in-

volving tapping out rhythms using different body parts. The students were shy about creating music in this way, but as they progressed through the activities, they exuded greater physical alertness, presence and authenticity by spontaneously generating creative music patterns. The group was encouraged to act quickly and instinctively by not being given time to think about their moves. Like the musicians, they were shown how to watch one another before speaking through their bodies. This approach appeared to build a sense of openness and receptivity within the group. Students laughed as they realised they could move and position their bodies more freely around the room in novel and surprising ways:

I focus on the students and their humming and their streamers - they are being taken out of themselves. (Sarah, music event, April 2016)

Some students found the open-ended experiences more difficult. Those standing nearest the tiered seating appeared particularly hesitant at the beginning of each new activity and often looked to each other before copying the facilitator's gestures:

Clicking, stamping, calling R one girl is laughing and smiling as she does it. A boy looks concerned. He twists his hands together. Perhaps he can't click? He's watching the tutor. He stretches and looks up at the lighting rig. (Sarah, music event, April 2016)

With multiple repetitions, however, most students eased into the process of making music. As more and more students began physically moving their bodies to different patterns, the energy in the room increased. This appeared to be washing over the entire group and Sarah noted the reaction in her own body:

But as I wrote, my body hummed. In that darkened space in the front row of the studio I remembered where I was and what we were doing there together. Like the students, lost in sound, I also began to listen. (Sarah, music event, April 2016)

The facilitator insisted that students listen deeply to one another, which resulted in students receiving focused attention from their peers, as well as the adults in the room. In one activity, students went around in a circle and played their instrument under the condition that they wait for the previous person's sound to finish. This meant listening until all reverberations had ceased. Some students were unable to resist jumping in and prematurely ending another person's sound by striking their own instrument. When successful, and it became more so, this example of careful listening led to a seamless flow of sound which was very hypnotic. A sense of unity had developed within the group:

A flow of continuous sound in the air is thick with intense concentration on the music/sound, of where it ends and where the silence begins. (Joanne, music event, April 2016)

### **Learning as the engaged body**

Learning as an embodied process was recognised at times when bodies spoke and responded to their physical contexts and to each other. This could be triggered by students repositioning themselves to engage in the different physical spaces, such as touring exhibits in the museum. Some felt very uneasy as they were unaccustomed to bodily positions that required a highly sensory level of engagement;

but, high levels of engagement also elicited spontaneous physical actions of joy and friendship.

An example was when students were invited to enter the confined spaces of the warship and submarine at the museum. We needed to climb backwards down a ladder to enter the submarine; an unfamiliar action for many. The novelty and challenge, however, created some excitement as those standing near the staircase noted how people managed the task in different ways. Students at the base of the staircase offered advice to those climbing down. The excitement prompted one teacher to comment on how the inability to see where we were going helped to lift inhibitions. Another teacher mentioned the brain was learning through making new connections and by breaking free of old bodily routines and patterns:

We are excited as we enter the submarine. Nervous chatter and giggling erupts. We have to go into the submarine backwards. My feet feel uncertain and I am worried I will fall. I surprise myself when I make it safely to the bottom. (Joanne, museum event April 2016)

The physical orientation of learning spaces also appears to trigger opportunities for deep sensory engagement of the type that characterises embodied practice. The museum had an exhibit that required students to re-position themselves to view huge rowing sculls attached by their hulls to a very high wall. To take in the full display, visitors must lean back and lift their eyes to the ceiling or even lie down so that the positioning of the boats can convey the size of the waves the rowers encountered. This upward perspective, looming high above the viewer, enhances the visual experience of the exhibit. It also represents the enormity of the achievement of the sailors who had rowed the boats. This was one way the museum engaged the body in an innovative way and it elicited responses from the students:

One student was seen lying down and staring mesmerised at the wall ... the whole exhibit seems to lend itself to seeing things from different perspectives, as items are hung and positioned in strange irregular angles. (Joanne, museum event, April 2016)

A boy asks why the boats are just up on a wall and not being used. The guide explains why we keep things in a museum. (Sarah, museum event, April 2016)

Learning is also intensified through the mutual joys experienced in an embodied learning encounter. After a long segment through which some students lost attention, boys from two different schools spontaneously came together to play an enormous snakes and ladder game in one of the exhibits. Students engaged in this activity and with each other on a highly physical level. Their loud laughter, periodic high fives and cheers filled the exhibition space, contravening the unspoken public rule of remaining quiet in a museum, but signifying a shift from disengagement to engagement. The boys' joint physicality became apparent through their vocal projection and the performance of a series of secret handshakes to express their new friendship. Through their bodies they were publicly acknowledging their friendships and expressing openness to one another and new learning. Up until this point most schools had not interacted with each other and the students had moved around the museum in school-based groups. After this experience, the small group

of boys who had participated in this interactive game left the museum together with their bodies jostling through playful bonding.

#### The caring body

The final theme considers the caring body, which illustrates how individuals show concern by being present for and connected to one another. We have noticed that the success of Sky High events is often strongly reliant on a facilitator's skill in making learning accessible. Expert facilitators make learning more engaging through high levels of enthusiasm, interest and care, which they often demonstrate through their bodies. They can enhance or diminish student motivation through elements of their voice, openness to respond to the groups' interests and ability to manage behaviour, such as attention and distraction in order to create memorable and exciting learning encounters. At the museum, one tour guide utilised an effective technique to communicate caringly with his group. He drew students close to him to create a discussion 'that [felt] like a fireside chat' (Sarah, museum visit, June, 2016). An intimate positioning of bodies was also evident in the calm, darkened space of the music workshop, where students demonstrated a growing sense of intimacy, trust and engagement by standing closer and closer to the facilitator on the stage area as the workshop progressed:

After the first activity I am immediately aware of the space. The students are positioned closer to [the facilitator]. There is a ring of boys less than a metre around forming a circle around her. I feel how they are drawn to her. (Joanne, music event, June 2016)

The teacher [from the student's school] is talking to the boy who is erratically moving the streamer. [The teacher's] body language is comfortable and he stands close, leaning in to hear what the child is saying. The boy obviously respects him and looks to him when he feels anxious. The teacher knows this and stands close behind his student. (Joanne, music event, April 2016)

At the museum, guides altered their voices and used vibrant bodily gestures to help students listen and remain attentive:

Inside the submarine exhibit. The guide has an increasing voice, like a sonar ... The guide has a good 'wait time', the kids are alive and alert. They stand very close to the guide. (Sarah, museum, June 2016)

The opposite was also noted. In one instance, a guide's inability to read the students' bodies exacerbated student disengagement. This guide struggled to get his students to engage in the exhibits. He appeared uncomfortable with recognising students' disinterest as a sign to change his methods and continued to speak despite students moving away from him. He sometimes responded harshly to students' questions and appeared frustrated at not being listened to. This encounter became difficult to observe as learners began losing trust in their guide. Unfortunately, it was impossible for another adult to completely fill his role as the school teachers were not from the museum and not knowledgeable of its content. The teachers took on a disciplinary stance which appeared to decrease students' motivation.

He urges us to go to see the items salvaged from a wreckage of a ship, Australia's worst maritime disaster. The students are not getting up. They are tired. He makes a sharp comment. He does not understand how they tire easily. He does not understand their disinterest. (Joanne, museum event, June 2016)

The significance of visible demonstrations of care is discussed by Noddings (1984) who points to ways that teachers undertake caring actions of paying attention through touch, gaze, supporting words, physical closeness or by using an encouraging, caring and inspiring tone of voice. The comparison between the two tour guides at the museum illustrates how the body can perform in different ways to impact student engagement.

#### Conclusion

By observing how individuals meaningfully engage in their environment through the placement and movement of their bodies, we raise awareness of how educators can make sense of and utilise the power of embodiment. The events discussed in this paper highlight the importance of observing embodied practice. We believe that observations of how bodies orientate themselves have potential to assist educators with techniques that can be transferred to a variety of learning environments. At the conclusion of this section, we offer suggestions to encourage educators to consider their attentiveness to the significance of the body.

The themes of this paper are the listening and speaking body, the learning and caring body. The use of ethnographic principles allows us to 'sit with' the students as we record and reflect on the things that 'catch them up' in engagement. These observations promote empathetic understanding towards the student participants and an increased sensitivity to what can easily be overlooked as educators focus on complex loads of delivering, monitoring and assessing learning to perform bodily as teachers. Our observations and reflections connect us with literature on embodied practice that asserts the body to be a very accurate form of knowing (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003). It also provides examples of how learners can engage in meaningful encounters by being deeply immersed through their senses (Grosz, 1994).

The body is shown to occupy a central and constantly changing role as people, environments and emotions shift. In the music event, the facilitator took great care to create an experience where students were involved; 'seeing the performance of sound, feeling through their own bodies these musical ideas, developing understanding engendered through these integrated, sensorial experiences' (Facilitator, music event, April 2016). The museum engaged students on a highly sensory and physical level through the use of sound, images, the positioning of artefacts and the design of space. This experience was heavily mediated through the skill of the guides, including one who created a memorable learning experience through his own ease and enjoyment of being in the space, expressions of his own interest and curiosity, and the pleasure he demonstrated being in the students' company.

Making space and time for bodily exploration is important. Listening and responding with one's body appears a valuable skill that is increasingly less utilised due to pressures in education to accumulate knowledge and be accountable. A mul-

tisensory learning experience, such as music, is vital in giving students reasons to main a high level of concentration. But educators must build safe spaces for students to slow down and learn to listen mindfully to their own bodies and build awareness of the bodies around them.

In terms of engagement, bodies give good clues as to levels of motivation, inspiration and disengagement. Students who are engaged in their learning tend to lean in and stand or sit closer, feel confident to move and experiment, and use their hands to touch their surroundings. Facilitators are also observed as being engaged when they use their bodies and voices dynamically and share their experiences with the students. Engagement can be construed as a mutual process, as often the pleasure of watching students lose themselves in an experience can enhance the engagement of facilitators and other students. Observation of embodied practice carries an added level of importance as this dimension can increase the intellectual and emotional presence of curriculum. Educators can use bodily awareness as a more dynamic method of asking students to listen attentively by encouraging the whole group to respond to all participants' input. Efforts to empower children, particularly those who are vulnerable, have potential to help teachers understand more than just what is spoken out loud. Finally, through embracing the body as a rich and diverse knowledge source, educators may be better able to encourage trust in the body and encourage learners to immerse themselves in opportunities which appear foreign and frightening, but which lead to valuable experiences and continual learning.

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## A case of EFL emotions: Engaging the refugee community of greater western English language learning

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### Abstract

Scientifically, there is no single agreed-upon definition of emotion. Although with the rise of humanistic approaches, enough attention has been given to the affective domain in language learning, the emotions English as a foreign language (EFL) learners experience regarding English language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing have not gained adequate attention. Accordingly, this study investigates whether language skills play any role in engendering emotions in EFL learners, or in other words, how language skills affect EFL learners' emotions. To this end, 20 students were interviewed to elicit their views about the emotions they experienced in EFL classes, as a basis for constructing the EFL Skills Emotions Questionnaire containing 20 items. Then, 308 students were asked to take the newly-designed scale. Afterwards, confirmatory factor analysis was utilised to validate the scale, and then EFL learners' emotions generated by language skills were measured and compared using ANOVA. Findings indicated that EFL learners experience anger mostly over listening skills, enjoyment and pride over speaking, shame over listening and speaking, hope, boredom, and hopelessness over writing and listening, and finally, anxiety over all of language skills. Finally the results were discussed and some suggestions were made for future research.

**Keywords:** EFL learners, enjoyment skills, listening, education

### Introduction

In other words, emotion is the representation of internal states and is tied to physical and sensory feelings (Lazarus, 1999). Obviously, emotions can significantly

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affect learning in general (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002), and foreign language learning in particular (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Mendez Lopez & Pea Aguilar, 2013). Moods and emotions can affect cognitive processes like memory and perception (Parkinson, Totterdell, Briner & Reynolds, 1996). Assuming this, a number of studies in different fields have been done to show the significance of emotions experienced in educational settings, such as research on students' test anxiety, which has continuously been under investigation since the 1930s (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007), and achievement motivation (Heckhausen, 1991, as cited in Pekrun, Frenzel, Goetz & Perry, 2007). Considering the fact that "the classroom is an emotional place" (Pekrun, 2014, p. 6), and bearing in mind that one's emotions affect his/her learning process, motivation, performance, identity development, and even health (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007), it is worthwhile to give more detailed and meticulous attention to academic emotions. According to Pekrun et al. (2002a), academic emotions, which include enjoyment, pride, boredom, and hopelessness, to name a few, are the emotions experienced in an academic setting and are related to students' learning, classroom instruction, and achievement. Moreover, a number of other studies have been done focusing on the role of affective aspects and emotions in different domains of education (e.g., Goleman, 1995; Linnenbrink, 2006; Schutz & Lanehart, 2002).

Having been defined as "the emotional side of human behavior" (Brown, 1994, p. 135), the affective domain plays a significant role in foreign language learning too. Although there is no doubt about the significance of affective factors in language learning process, no attention has been given to them until the rise of humanistic approach and its particular attention to the affective domain and emotional states (Mendez Lopez & Pea Aguilar, 2013). When it comes to language learning, it should be noted that investigating the role of emotion is not a novel phenomenon in the domain of second/foreign language teaching and learning (Pishghadam, Adamson & Shayesteh, 2013); however, there is only scanty research done on emotions experienced by English language learners (Imai, 2010; Pishghadam, 2009). Despite this, previous literature has indicated that language learners experience a variety of both negative and positive emotions such as enjoyment and pride (Goetz, Frenzel, Hall & Pekrun, 2008), fear (Ellis, 1994), and anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). Assuming this, existing literature has focused more on the destructive impacts of negative emotions like anxiety and has not paid adequate attention to the beneficial impacts of positive emotions (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002b). Keeping this in mind, although several studies have been done on emotions in the English as a foreign language (EFL) domain, there has been no comprehensive study focusing on how language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) can evoke emotions such as boredom, hopelessness, shame, and enjoyment, to name a few.

Consequently, this body of research can be distinguished from prior literature in terms of its focus on examining the role of language skills in engendering a variety of positive and negative emotions, which surely function differently, but should be studied simultaneously. To this end, the present study aims to, at first, develop

and validate a scale called *EFL Skills Emotions Scale*, which assesses EFL learners' emotional states engendered by language skills. The second aim of this study is to measure the emotions EFL learners experience with regard to language skills. Thus, our research questions are:

Q1. What factors underlie the EFL Skills Emotions Scale?

Q2. Do language skills play any significant role in engendering emotions?

### **Theoretical framework**

Unlike other concepts in science, there is no single agreed definition of emotion. Nevertheless, there is a considerable consensus that emotion is an affective reaction that changes the way of thinking, behaving and expressing (Scherer, Schorr & Johnstone, 2001). These reactions can be ascribed to an incident (Otto, Euler & Mandl, 2000) or situations in which a person's goals and concerns are significantly affected (Parrott, 2001) such as educational settings that have the potentiality of manipulating one's emotions. Similarly, Al-Nafjan, Al-Wabil and Al-Ohaili (2016, p. 595) stated that "emotion is an affective state induced by a specific stimulus".

### **Emotion in academic settings**

Emotional states can have significant impacts on education and learning, and when it comes to education, investigating the entire diverse range of emotions experienced in academic settings seems to be of high importance because learning and achievement are "major sources of human emotions today" (Pekrun et al., 2002a, p. 92). Assuming this, Pekrun et al.'s (2002a) study on academic emotions is a shining example of educational research aimed at investigating the emotions experienced in educational settings. These emotions, which are related to achievement activities or outcomes, are also defined as achievement emotions (Pekrun, 2006), and are critically crucial for learners' motivation, learning strategies, identity development, and health (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007). Pekrun, Frenzel, Goetz and Perry's (2007) study on academic emotions provides a multi-dimensional taxonomy of achievement emotions (see Table 1) which includes three dimensions, namely object focus (activity or outcome), valence (positive or negative), and activation (activating or deactivating). For instance, enjoyment is considered to be a positive emotion which can activate students while they are doing tasks, and thus, enhance academic motivation. In contrast, hopelessness is a negative deactivating emotion which can be detrimental (Pekrun et al., 2002a) and is related to outcomes.

**Table 1:** A three-dimensional taxonomy of achievement emotions (Pekrun et al., 2007, p. 16)

Focus	Positive		Negative	
	Activating	Deactivating	Activating	Deactivating
Activity focus	Enjoyment	Relaxation	Anger Frustration	Boredom
Outcome focus	Joy Hope Pride Gratitude	Contentment Relief	Anxiety Shame Anger	Sadness Disappointment Hopelessness

Keeping this in mind, although several questionnaires and instruments have been developed for assessing emotions, there had not been a comprehensive instrument before 2005, which could specifically investigate academic emotions and their impacts on achievement. The *Academic Emotions Questionnaire* (AEQ) developed by Pekrun, Goetz and Perry (2005) is a self-report instrument which has been designed to assess the relationship between achievement emotions and students' learning and academic performance. Feelings of anger, enjoyment, hope, boredom, and hopelessness are among such series of emotions, which can be regarded as the most prevalent emotions in academic settings, particularly in the language learning domain.

### **Emotions and language learning**

Emotions are so important that they can influence a person in deciding whether to study a foreign language and whether to continue doing a task in a language classroom or not (Mendez Lopez & Pea Aguilar, 2013). In this regard, having utilised Pekrun et al.'s (2005) AEQ, Ismail (2016) found that both negative and positive emotions students experience in English classes have an impact on their English achievement. In addition, he takes the stance that if English language teachers want to reduce negative emotions and provide peace in their classrooms, they need to take into account their students' academic emotions and consider them as part of education. In addition, Mendez Lopez and Pea Aguilar (2013) pointed out that both positive and negative emotions can have significant impacts on foreign language learners' motivation. They found that negative emotions like fear and sadness can enhance learning and can also be regarded as positive and motivational in foreign language learning process.

Generally, negative emotions affect students' motivation, attention, and use of learning strategies (Zeidner, 1998). Similarly, Goleman (1995) took the stance that "students who are anxious, angry, or depressed do not learn; people who are caught in these states do not take in information efficiently or deal with it well" (p. 78). For instance, anxiety, which is the most frequently studied emotion in academic domains (Pekrun et al., 2002a), is also associated with foreign language learning and affects EFL learners' achievement (Horwitz et al., 1986) and performance in tasks related to language skills. Many scholars believe that foreign language anxiety has negative impacts on the learners' productive language skills (e.g., Cheng, 2002; Daly & Wilson, 1983; Spielmann & Radnofsky, 2001). However, there are some assertions made by other scholars who take the stance that anxiety has negative effects on reading and listening comprehension as perceptive skills (Bacon, 1989; Lund, 1991; Sellers, 2000). Prior research has indicated that students who have higher levels of writing anxiety write shorter compositions even when they are writing in their native language (Horwitz et al., 1986). Similarly, Peyman and Sedighi (2011) found that the more EFL learners have stress, the worse they perform in reading comprehension tests. In the same vein, Mahmoudzade (2012) indicated that, in comparison with less proficient EFL learners, those who have higher levels of speaking proficiency experience less speaking anxiety.

On the contrary, emotions like anger, relief, enjoyment, hope, shame, pride, boredom, and hopelessness, which have profound effects on achievement and learning (Pekrun, 2006) and are critically crucial for learners' motivation, learning strategies, identity development, and health (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007), have been extensively neglected. Regarding enjoyment, Yökselir (2014) found that language learners have high levels of enjoyment before learning as compared to enjoyment during learning and enjoyment after learning. This is somehow in harmony with the assertion Horwitz et al. (1986) made arguing that anxiety is inherent in foreign language learning processes. In brief, a positive activating emotion like enjoyment can increase interest and motivation (Pekrun et al., 2007). Prior studies investigating the relation between emotional states and cognitive performance have also found out that pleasant emotions like enjoyment and hope bring about flexible thought, the ability of elaborating ideas, and engagement in self-regulative and metacognitive strategies. It has also been revealed that positive moods and emotional states have impacts on students' performances in processing information (Febrilia, Warokka & Abdullah, 2011), and that they have a facilitating role in memory processes and retrieval of long-term memory (Isen & Patrick, 1983), and executive tasks (Phillips, Bull, Adams & Fraser, 2002).

On the other hand, for instance, concerning boredom, Pekrun et al. (2007) took the stance that boredom is induced when students do not find any negative or positive value in the activity they are doing. According to Brookes (2010), boredom is mostly more associated with writing than might be expected. This may be due to the fact that students find little mutual engagement in writing, while the intensity of mutual engagement in speaking and conversations is more, which leads to a more enjoyable atmosphere in speaking classes. In this regard, Brookes (2010) stated that if students understand that there is mutual engagement in writing skills too, they become more enthusiastic and will be less likely to experience boredom. In addition, it has also been found that unpleasant emotions like boredom and hopelessness are associated with external guidance and regulation (Pekrun et al., 2002a). These findings imply that language teachers should adjust their teaching methodology and approach to one that can decrease the detrimental impacts of negative emotions like boredom, and increase the beneficial effects of positive emotions because as Fried (2011) stated, positive emotions lead to the production of more ideas and strategies by both teachers and students. Considering the fact that teachers play the most influential role in promoting students' achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1997), and bearing in mind that emotionally intelligent teachers are more able to interact with their students and to make positive teacher-student relationships (Rust, 2014), it can be concluded that teachers can also play an active role in understanding and regulating their students' emotions. Thus, due to its significance, the issue needs to be included in teacher education programs.

However, one of the key points which is worth knowing about assessing academic emotions is that such emotions are domain specific, meaning that not all subjects and fields are favoured by students in school and university contexts (Goetz et al., 2008). Having examined the interrelations of students' academic enjoyment,

achievement, and self-concepts in two domains of mathematics and German language, Goetz et al. (2008) found that a student's level of enjoyment in a mathematics class is not necessarily similar and equal to that of a language class like German. Similarly, Goetz, Frenzel, Pekrun, Hall and Ludtke (2007) investigated the between-domain relations of emotions like enjoyment, pride, anxiety, anger, and boredom in four different domains, namely, mathematics, physics, German, and English classrooms. Based on their findings, the between-domain relations observed for these academic emotions were generally weak. They also found out that, in comparison with more different domains (e.g., mathematics and English), the relations between emotions experienced in similar subject domains (e.g., mathematics and physics) are stronger.

As stated earlier, not enough attention was given to emotions and affective factors in language learning until the rise of humanistic approach and teaching methodologies, such as *Community Language Learning*, *Silent Way*, and *Suggestopedia* (Mendez Lopez & Pea Aguilar, 2013). Pishghadam, Tabatabaeyan, and Navari (2013) held the view that emotion is one of the main factors in language teaching and learning. As Pishghadam and Zabihi (2012) stated, emotional ability is one of the indicators of improving the quality of life; thus, teaching should not focus merely on a specific subject or domain but should also include emotions. In this regard, Pishghadam (2011) claimed that English language classrooms can be a place for improving human abilities along with teaching and learning English. Keeping this in mind, Pishghadam, Adamson et al. (2013), who were inspired by Greenspan's (1992) *Developmental Individual-Difference Relationship-Based model* (DIR), came up with a novel approach to second language acquisition named *Emotion-Based Language Instruction* (EBLI), which is based on the fact that having stronger emotions toward second/foreign language vocabularies leads to a better understanding of them and facilitates learning. In other words, each individual may experience a different emotion when he/she is encountered with a word or concept in a language (Pishghadam & Shayesteh, in press). Hence, some words may be learned faster and easier because they have a higher level of *emotioncy* for learners (Pishghadam, Jajarmi & Shayesteh, in press; Pishghadam, Shayesteh & Rahmani, in press). In this regard, *emotioncy* refers to the degree of emotions one has toward language entities (Pishghadam, Adamson et al., 2013). According to Pishghadam (2016), "emotioncy ranges on a hierarchical order of null, auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, inner, and arch emotioncies" (p. 1). Based on this classification, higher levels of emotioncy (inner and arch) bring about higher levels of comprehension, learning, and retention because of involvement, i.e., they engage learners from inside, while lower levels of emotioncy (auditory, visual, kinaesthetic) lead to exvolvement because they engage learners from outside (Pishghadam, 2016). Recent studies have also found that even students' open and closed postures can bring about both positive and negative moods and emotions (Zabetipour, Pishghadam & Ghonsooly, 2016) leading to possible changes in EFL learners' perceptions of class activity (Zabetipour & Pishghadam, 2016), which may

indicate that even students' postures need to be taken into account by language teachers.

Given that students' emotional states and learning are inextricably and deeply related to each other (Goleman, 1995), and bearing in mind that students' learning and motivation as well as teachers' performance can be affected by emotions (Meyer & Turner, 2007; Pekrun et al., 2002a), and also being mindful of the fact that affective states are regarded to have significant impact on language learning process (Gardner, 1985), it is worth looking for a way to assess and examine emotional states in English language classrooms. Thus, employing Pekrun et al.'s (2005) AEQ, this study aims to develop and validate a scale called *EFL Skills Emotions Scale*, and to measure the emotions EFL learners experience with regard to language skills.

### **Method.**

#### **Participants and setting**

Three hundred and eight (150 female, 48.7%, and 158 male, 51.3%) intermediate English language learners from eight private language institutes in Mashhad, Iran, where they were learning English for conversation purposes participated in the present study voluntarily. The participants' ages ranged between 12 and 37 (mean = 17.7, SD = 4.76). In addition, their previous term's overall score ranged between 57 and 100 (mean = 87.7, SD = 8.25). They all spoke Persian as their mother language.

#### **Instrument**

The authors designed a scale in English (see Appendix), which includes 20 items, each having 9 alternatives, based on Pekrun et al.'s (2005) AEQ and interviews with EFL learners. AEQ is a self-report instrument which manifests the relationships between achievement emotions, students' learning, and academic performance. In order to assure the content validity of the scale, the items were written after passing through two steps. Firstly, a number of English language classes were attended and interviews were held with about 20 male and female EFL learners who described their perspectives on the main emotions experienced in the EFL classes. Then, their answers were collected, revised, and presented as the items examining the participants' emotions regarding English language skills. Secondly, after doing a comprehensive review of the literature, nine emotions including anger, anxiety, shame, relief, enjoyment, hope, pride, boredom, and hopelessness were used as the alternatives of the scale, which were adapted from Pekrun et al.'s (2005) AEQ. Afterwards, values of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 were assigned to these alternatives, respectively, to run statistical analysis. One of the questions, for instance, read, "What emotion/s do you have when your English language teacher is teaching listening skill?". The participants were asked to specify what emotion(s) they have regarding this situation by selecting none, one, two or any number of nine choices presented below each item. Finally, it is important to note that since none of the participants chose relief, this emotion was removed from the statistical analysis process.

As Table 4 presents, for instance, while there is a significant difference between the means of language skills regarding anxiety, no significant difference has

been found between means of language skills with regard to enjoyment ( $F = 50.708$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Table 4 shows us that there is a significant difference somewhere between the means, except for anxiety ( $p = .246 > .05$ ), but we do not know which means differ from the others; therefore, post-hoc tests needed to be carried out to determine which pairs of means differ from each other. The following sets of pairwise comparisons (see Table 5) indicate what the exact difference is between the means.

The pairwise comparisons for emotions in terms of language skills are presented in Table 5. This table indicates that in almost all cases, or in other words, in all pairs, except for anxiety, there is a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between the effects each language skill has on emotions. For instance, in case of anger, there is a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between all language skills except for reading and speaking ( $p = .89 > 0.05$ ) indicating that these two language skills have the same impact on feeling of anger.

**Table 5:** Pairwise comparisons of language skills

	kill	can diff.	td. error	ig.(b)		kill	can diff.	td. error	ig.(b)
Anger	vs. R	244*	049	000	Anxiety	vs. S	055	072	445
	vs. S	308*	043	000		vs. W	114	074	128
	vs. W	136*	057	018		vs. L	026	074	727
	vs. S	065	038	089		vs. S	081	068	232
	vs. R	107*	050	034		vs. W	140	080	083
	vs. S	172*	052	001		vs. W	058	077	449
Shame	vs. R	166*	045	000	Enjoy- ment	vs. W	016	155	917
	vs. S	055	059	347		vs. L	627*	142	000
	vs. W	211*	056	000		vs. W	643*	115	000
	vs. W	045	038	234		vs. L	.403*	141	000
	vs. R	110*	051	032		vs. R	776*	111	000

	vs. W	156*	053	003		vs. W	.419*	130	000
Hope	vs. R	649*	069	000	Pride	vs. L	146*	064	023
	vs. S	708*	071	000		vs. L	756*	079	000
	vs. S	058	034	086		vs. R	610*	075	000
	vs. L	153	087	080		vs. W	510*	084	000
	vs. R	802*	078	000		vs. L	247*	070	000
	vs. S	860*	076	000		vs. R	101	074	176
Boredom	vs. R	503*	103	000	Hopeless- ness	vs. R	224*	052	000
	vs. S	.003*	096	000		vs. S	282*	045	000
	vs. S	500*	076	000		vs. S	058	034	086
	vs. L	214	110	053		vs. L	084	065	197
	vs. R	718*	103	000		vs. R	308*	057	000
	vs. S	.218*	103	000		vs. S	367*	057	000
Based on estimated marginal means									
* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.									
b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least significant difference (equivalent to no adjustments).									

Concerning anxiety, the results indicate that there is no significant difference between language skills, meaning that anxiety is the only emotion which was equally experienced in all occasions and situations. With regard to shame, although there is a significant difference between listening and reading ( $p = .000 < .05$ ), listening and writing ( $p = .000 < .05$ ), speaking and reading ( $p = .032 < .05$ ), and speaking and writing ( $p = 0.03 < .05$ ), no significant difference was found between either listening and speaking ( $p = .347 > .05$ ) or reading and writing ( $p = .234 > .05$ ). This result indicates that the pair of listening and speaking and the pair of reading and writing have the same impacts on the feeling of shame.

Regarding enjoyment, except for listening and reading ( $p = .917 > .05$ ), in all other pairs, there is a significant difference between language skills. Similarly, concerning pride, a significant difference was found between language skills in almost all comparisons made, except for only one case, writing and reading ( $p = .176 > .05$ ).

This table also indicates that concerning hope, there is no significant difference between reading and speaking ( $p = .086 > .05$ ) and also writing and listening ( $p = .080 > .05$ ). However, in all other cases, a significant difference was found.

With regard to boredom, as it was mentioned before, both writing and listening skills bring about boredom in EFL classrooms. Accordingly, as this table shows, there is no significant difference between writing and listening ( $p = .053 > .05$ ) in the extent of boredom they cause. On the other hand, in all other cases, there is a significant difference between language skills. Finally, concerning hopefulness, except for only two pairs, namely, reading and speaking ( $p = .086 > .05$ ), and also writing and reading ( $p = .197 > .05$ ), there is a significant difference between all other pairs of skills.

### Discussion

The present study showed that the EFL Skills Emotions Scale is a reliable measure of English language learners' emotions regarding language skills. As mentioned earlier, this paper reported on the construction and validation of a scale called EFL Skills Emotions Scale, which assesses EFL learners' emotional states generated by language skills. The second aim of this study was to measure the emotions EFL learners experience with regard to language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing). Based on the findings of the study, EFL Skills Emotions Scale manifests the academic emotions which were adapted from Pekrun et al.'s (2005) AEQ. The results also revealed that each one of language skills is associated with specific emotions.

Based on the findings, anxiety was the only emotion which was intensely engendered by all four English language skills. This finding is in harmony with the assertion made by Horwitz et al. (1986), who held the view that foreign language learning activates anxiety in EFL learners. In addition, this finding is in accord with previous studies that indicated anxiety might have negative impacts on both productive (e.g., Cheng, 2002; Daly & Wilson, 1983) and perceptive language skills (Bacon, 1989; Lund, 1991). Difficulty in speaking in front of the teacher and other classmates, listening to native or native-like accents in audio clips, and writing using accurate grammar and spelling, as well as reading texts and comprehending them accurately without making any mistakes may lead to fear of negative evaluation and thus bring about language anxiety. These facts highlight the significant role of language teachers as facilitators and counsellors, who should pay considerate attention to actual emotional needs of learners and offer solutions and suggestions for attaining confidence and calmness. In brief, the findings of the present study and also the previous ones (e.g., Cheng, 2002; Mahmoudzade, 2012) indicate that more attention should be given to language anxiety.

Based on the findings of this study, listening is the only English language skill which is associated with all of the negative emotions (e.g., anger, shame, boredom and hopelessness). Generally, frustration is one of the main causes of anger (Averill, 1983). Moreover, since listening is a complex process, which involves discriminating between unfamiliar sounds, understanding the meaning of words, and interpreting stress and intonation as well as the meaning in the immediate and sociocultural

environment (Vandergrift, 1999), language learners may feel frustrated for this endless effort, which may lead to the feeling of anger. In addition, when they fail to utter what they had heard in the classroom, feelings of shame and hopelessness might be triggered. In fact, shame is triggered when one fails to meet important internalised goals, rules, or standards (Lewis, 1993). According to Turner and Waugh (2007), shame is "one of the most distressing and disruptive unpleasant emotions" (p. 131). Moreover, an interesting point observed in the findings of the study is that both opposite feelings of hope and hopelessness are engendered by the listening skill. Listening is the only skill which puts a heavy pressure on the learners' cognition to simultaneously entangle with decoding sounds, retaining information, considering grammatical features, and the speed of sounds (Walker, 2014). Generally, when the focus is on finding the right answers to the follow-up questions in the listening tasks, students will feel hopeless if they fail to answer correctly. Generally, hopelessness is posited to occur whenever success or a positive satisfying achievement outcome is not attainable (Pekrun et al., 2007). Moreover, hope is considered to be a positive outcome-focused emotion while hopelessness is a negative outcome-focused emotion (Elliot & Pekrun, 2007). Assuming this, language teachers need not focus merely on the product, meaning that adequate attention should also be given to the process of learning. When the focus is on the product/outcome rather than the process, students' final performance is only judged, which may bring about a feeling of hope or hopelessness.

Moreover, the findings showed that listening is also associated with boredom. Pekrun et al. (2007) pointed out that boredom is induced when students do not find any negative or positive value in the activity they are doing. Moreover, due to the fact that listening is regarded as the most difficult skill to learn (Vandergrift, 2004), and that language learners find it difficult to grasp and utter what they have heard, they may not find any positive value in listening activities and then feel bored. Moreover, language learners are not able to see the speaker and the environment when they are listening to audio files. Hence, video clips can be regarded as "a very valuable tool for language learning" (Woottipong, 2014, p. 203) because they provide contextual information and an environment helping language learners improve their listening comprehension and confidence in speech (Shrosbree, 2008).

Unlike other language skills, feelings of enjoyment and pride are mostly triggered by the speaking skill. The findings also indicate that, in comparison with other language skills, speaking brings about the least amount of boredom and hopelessness in language classrooms. Generally, emotional states can influence thinking, meaning that students can perform and learn better when they feel happy, interested, and excited about the task they are to do (Oatley & Nundy, 1996). Thus, the fact that speaking is the most enjoyable skill for language learners can be related to their probable interest in speaking. In the same vein, positive activating emotions like enjoyment can broaden thought-action repertoires leading to creative and novel thoughts and ideas (Fredrickson, 1998), which are particularly useful in speaking.

In contrast to speaking, writing is associated with a higher extent of negative unpleasant emotions like boredom, hopelessness, and anger in language learners.

This finding accords with the assertion Brookes (2010) made arguing that boredom is mostly associated with writing. As mentioned earlier, according to Pekrun et al. (2007), boredom is induced when students do not find any negative or positive value in the activity they are doing. In other words, when students are faced with either a low or a high-demand activity, they experience boredom (Pekrun et al., 2007). In addition, Pekrun et al. (2007) took the stance that hopelessness arises from negative achievement outcomes or when "a positive achievement outcome cannot be attained" (p. 19). Keeping these in mind, with regard to writing, for one thing, feeling negative emotions may be due to the fact that there is little mutual engagement in writing, and that in most of the cases, EFL learners need to do the writing tasks on their own, while the intensity of mutual engagement in speaking and conversations is greater, which leads to a more enjoyable atmosphere. In this regard, Brookes (2010) advanced the view that if students understand that there is mutual engagement in the writing skill, they become more enthusiastic and will be less likely to experience boredom. Secondly, although students' emotional states and feelings as well as their state of mind can be discovered through writing (Brookes, 2010), encoding thoughts and feelings seem to be an overwhelming task for language learners.

Concerning reading skill, the findings of the study indicate that reading can be considered as a neutral skill in engendering negative or positive emotions. In contrast, Moore (1993) pointed out that for science students reading is both boring and overly time-consuming. However, as mentioned earlier, academic settings are highly domain-specific. That is to say, for instance, a student's level of boredom in a science class is not necessarily similar and equal to that of an English language class. Moreover, this study showed that reading does not bring about boredom as much as listening and writing skills do. This can be, firstly, due to the fact that reading sections of language learning books taught in Iran, in most of the cases, include stories about real life events, outstanding celebrities, and famous tourist attractions, which make learners become more interested. Secondly, language learners are often provided with visual elements (i.e., photos) in reading comprehension sections, and thus, can understand the texts more easily.

In summary, considering the significant impact of affective factors on language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), and based on the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that it is essential to help students manage, regulate, and control their emotions and feelings in language classrooms. Based on the principles of *Suggestopedia*, which is defined as "the application of suggestion to pedagogy" (Bancroft, 1999, p. 16), most learning happens in a both relaxed and focused state (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). *Suggestopedia* was originally developed in the 1970s by Lozanov, whose aim was to provide a positive state of mind and environment, where language learners would overcome psychological obstacles through positive suggestion (Guclu & Ayhan, 2016). Thus, language teachers need to take into account the possible impacts of language skills on learners' emotions, and consider every aspect or factor which can affect and manipulate learners' emotions in

order to create a positive state of mind and secure environment for the development of optimal learning of their students.

This can be done by encouraging students to express their feelings and talk about their learning worries while they are doing tasks related to each language skill. Moreover, making use of visual elements (e.g. video clips) that include contextual information for listening tasks, and promoting mutual engagement while learners are doing writing tasks may have positive impacts on their performance and reduce negative emotions like boredom. Future research however, can be conducted to measure the emotions engendered by language sub-skills, i.e., grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. In addition, further studies can be done to draw a comparison between male and female language learners and investigate the type of emotions they experience regarding language skills. Furthermore, the relationship between EFL learners' emotional intelligence and the emotions they experience in English language classrooms can be explored in future studies.

The aim of the present study was to explore what types of difficulties student teachers enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in English Language Teacher Education program offered in a blended format and their cooperating teachers encountered during the student teacher practicum. The participants were 21 fourth grade student teachers and 12 cooperating teachers. Semi-structured interview questions were used to collect data. The interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed to be analyzed. According to the findings, the problems student teachers faced were grouped into four areas: assessment systems, computer-assisted communication, challenges with mentors, and psychological issues. Cooperating teachers' problems were categorized as problems associated with the program and problems associated with the student teachers. The results of this study contribute to an increased understanding of the problems that student teachers and their cooperating teachers face during field experience at an English language teacher education program offered in a distance format. This study provides suggestions for establishing more effective mentorship during the field experience.

**Keywords:** English language teacher, distance education, practicum, student teachers, cooperating teachers

#### Introduction

Blended learning (BL), from a general aspect, is a combination of online learning and face-to-face learning. However, other definitions also exist. For example, Wu, Tennyson, and Hsia (2010) defines BL as "an instructional system that combines multiple learning delivery methods, including most often face-to-face classroom with asynchronous and/or synchronous online learning" (p.155). In this definition online learning refers to technologically-supported learning activities, which are Web-based or available online. Graham (2006) considers BL as an approach, and defines BL as a learning approach that combines different delivery methods and styles of learning. The blend could be between any forms of instructional technology (e.g., Videotype, Web-based learning, CD-ROM, etc.). Bliuc et al. (2007) regards BL as the set of "learning activities that involves a sys-

tematic combination of face-to-face interactions and technologically-mediated interactions between students, teachers, and learning resources” (p. 234).

#### Background to the Study

In Turkey, English language teacher education programs are implemented in two formats. The first is a four-year traditional program. In this format, the student teachers receive face-to-face education, and the courses are term-based. Field experience is an important part of the English language teacher training program. In the present study, the terms field experience, school-based teaching, and practicum are used interchangeably. Regarding field experience, during their final year, the student teachers practice teaching at a cooperating school under the supervision of an experienced English language teacher (cooperating teacher) working at that school. The cooperating teacher and the university supervisor prepare a weekly schedule for each student teacher. The student teachers are required to go to the cooperating school at scheduled times each week, observe the cooperating teacher, create lesson plans, and practice teaching. The cooperating teacher is responsible for the professional development of the student teacher, including observing the student teacher and taking notes, providing assistance with the lesson plans, and giving feedback about the student teacher's work. The university supervisor is also responsible for the professional development of the student teacher. The university teacher's responsibilities are similar to those of the cooperating teacher: assisting the students with their lesson plans, observing them, and giving feedback about their teaching performance. The evaluation of the student teachers for this course is a shared responsibility of the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor.

The second program is designed for training English language teachers to meet the demands in Turkey. It is implemented in a blended format; that is, the student teachers receive face-to-face education in their first two years and take courses online in their third and fourth years. The main resource for the student teachers is the course books. To make these books more comprehensible, an online support program is offered to the student teachers. In this system, each unit of each course book is supported online by extra activities to be done during preparation, learning, and review, as well as a posttest that enables the student teachers to evaluate their own performance. Regarding the assessment of the student teachers, they can take the tests in any of 13 cities throughout Turkey. Student teachers who do not live in one of these cities have to take the tests in the nearest test center. For each course, they are required to take three tests throughout the two terms and a final test at the end of the second term. To assess the student teachers' teaching practice, the cooperating teachers are required to evaluate the work of the student teachers at intervals, complete observation and evaluative forms, and send their portfolio to the course evaluator committee at the end of the term. Fifty percent of the student teacher's final grade comes from the cooperating teacher and 50% comes from the evaluator committee's evaluation.

Regarding field experience, the student teachers in the blended program, unlike in the traditional program, are supervised regularly only by their cooperating teachers. Although the university supervisors in this program cannot make regular

visits to the cooperating schools, an expert group visits the schools once or twice a year to provide onsite support related to the practicum process. In addition, a team of teachers evaluates the student teacher's lesson plans at the end of each term and gives feedback through letters to both the cooperating teacher and the student teacher by making suggestions on how to improve the process of writing and evaluating lesson plans. The cooperating teachers are also provided with handbooks prepared by the faculty and CDs to guide them during the teaching practice course. These resources include guidelines about the responsibilities of the practicum's members, model lesson plans and observation or evaluation forms. Because the cooperating teachers do not have the opportunity to interact with a university supervisor regularly, the most frequently used resources are the handbook and the CD.

It is largely the cooperating teacher's responsibility to supervise the student teachers during the practicum. In other words, cooperating teachers have to take on more responsibilities because they are readily available for the student teachers to contact during their practicum. However, online support (asynchronous environment) is offered to student teachers, and they can at any time ask about problems related to the field experience period via Email. In addition to Email, the student teachers and cooperating teachers also communicate with university supervisors by telephone and mail.

Field experience is considered to be the most important part of a teacher education program (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). Quality in teacher preparation largely depends on the quality of the field-based experience (Endeley, 2014; O'Shea, Hammite, Mainzer, & Crutchfield, 2000). However, there is little research on field experience in distance education programs (Conderman, Morin, & Stephens, 2005). The most challenging part of a distance teacher education program is the field experience (Savaş, 2006). Recent research indicate that logistical and educational challenges may occur in distance teacher education contexts (Du Plessis, 2013, 2011) and identification of the weaknesses and challenges of a program is a vital step in ensuring improvements of its effectiveness (Scrieven, 1998). Therefore, a diagnosis of the challenges that the student teachers and cooperating teachers encounter will provide a holistic view of the program and feedback to the program organizers of the blended teacher education programme on monitoring the supervisory process and will enable them to take steps to minimize the impact of these challenges, which in turn could serve as a basis for the improvement of the programme. Based on these targeted outcomes, the research questions of the present study are:

1. What problems do student teachers in the blended English language teacher education face during their field experience?
2. What problems do cooperating teachers supervising the student teachers in the blended English language teacher education face during the distance field experience?

#### Theoretical Framework

Two conceptualizations frame the study. The first one is the equivalency theory. A central key to this theory is the concept of equivalency, which refers to

designing learning environments in such a way as to provide equal value for on-campus and distance learners. In other words, although the on-campus and distance learners have fundamentally different learning environments, equivalent learning experiences should be designed for all students regardless of their distance from the institution (Simonson, 1999; Schollosser & Simonson, 2006). Another key to equivalency theory is the use of telecommunication technology, such as synchronous audio, video, and computer networks, to promote communication (Simonson, 1999). Synchronous interaction need not be mandatory, however. Various communications systems, including asynchronous ones, can and should be used for distance education, as long as the goal of equivalency of experiences is met.

The second theory framing the present study is social constructivism, which claims that development must occur through social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). This is true of the student teaching practice. The student teacher adds new skills and information to his or her existing mental framework through interactions with his or her environment during the field experience. For Vygotsky (1978), the teacher (mentor) is a facilitator and guide.

Cooperating teachers are facilitators who assist student teachers as they attempt to construct their own learning and meaning. When the learner needs the greatest assistance, the cooperating teacher provides scaffolding to ensure that the learner's constructs will continue to grow stronger and more complex. The mentor also provides scaffolding and encouragement to build the student's confidence.

#### Research Methodology

##### Participants

There are two groups of participants. Participants in the study were 21 fourth year student teachers doing their field experience in four regions of Turkey (Marmara, Aegean, Central Anatolia, and East Anatolia).

In the present study, the student teachers were in their final year. All the student teachers were assigned to a cooperating school in the city where they resided to practice teaching for five hours a week under the supervision of a cooperating teacher at that school. In addition to this course, they also took other courses such as Using English Literature in Teaching, Testing and Evaluation in English, Teaching Language Skills, Pedagogical Grammar, Language Acquisition, Turkish Phonology, and Morphology and Syntax.

The second group of study participants comprised 12 English teachers who were assigned as cooperating teachers to supervise the student teachers during the practicum. Each cooperating teacher supervised between four and seven student teachers.

##### Data Collection Tool

Data were collected through semi-open interview questions based on the related literature (Du Plessis, 2013; Faikhamta, Jantarakantee, & Roadrangka, 2011) which asked about the challenges and problems they encountered during the practicum period. They were also asked to give examples of these challenges. Two experts from the English Language Teaching (ELT) department were asked to review the semi-open interview questions for achieving content and face validity.

### Data Collection Procedures

By the time the data were collected, the student teachers and the cooperating teachers had been in the practicum for nearly two months. After preparing an interview schedule, the researcher constructed the interview protocols with the study participants. The researcher traveled to three cities (Bursa, Eskişehir, and Malatya) to construct the interview protocols with the participants in person. An informed consent form was prepared according to the European Commission Ethical Research Guidelines for the volunteer participants before the collection of the data through interviews. The participants were informed about the research in detail. The interviews were conducted in Turkish and recorded. Interview sections lasted approximately 20 minutes. The interviews took place at the student teachers' schools during the school day. A set of semi-structured interview questions such as "What are the problems you faced during practicum?" and "What are the problems related to your cooperating teacher?" served as the main data collection instrument.

### Data Analysis

The interview sections were tape-recorded and then transcribed. The written data were analyzed through qualitative analysis (Walker, 2002). First, the student teachers were numbered and labeled as ST 1, ST 2, and so on. A similar process was applied for the cooperating teachers. At the beginning of the analysis, the quotations were examined line by line. Meaningful responses, which could be either a single sentence or a cluster of sentences, were identified. Responses with meanings similar in content were clustered and categorized. Then, the responses were reread with a focus on key words. Each key word was underlined. During a third round of reading, responses with similar key words were highlighted in color, with each color representing a particular group of key words. This helped the researcher categorize and cluster related responses. Lastly, each categorized quotation was analyzed again, and themes that turned out to be subsumable under others were identified as sub-issues. The sample student teacher and cooperating teacher responses were translated from Turkish to English.

### Results

The analysis of the results indicated three types of problems: problems common to both the student teachers and their cooperating teachers, problems reported by only student teachers, and problems reported by only cooperating teachers (Table 1). In this section, the results will be discussed according to these three types of problems.

**Lack of faculty support.** The cooperating teachers revealed that they were not very sure about the practicum process, which included issues such as the responsibilities of the cooperating teachers and student teachers, lesson planning, and evaluation of the student teachers. The only resource available when a problem was identified is the handbook prepared by the faculty. A cooperating teacher mentions the following:

Some of the points are difficult to understand....we ask one another about these unclear points and discuss them. We do not have the opportunity to clarify

everything. Although the faculty says we can contact them whenever we have a question, there are times when we are unable to reach them.

The cooperating teachers indicated their need to interact more often with the university instructors responsible for the program. One of the cooperating teachers explained this problem as follows:

The only resource during this period is the handbook prepared by the university. We, together with the other cooperating teachers at the school, read the information and then meet our responsibilities accordingly. If there is something unclear about this information, we have the chance to contact the faculty by Email and phone. However, this is not very practical and takes time. So, we try to find the right way through discussions.

In the same vein, one of the student teachers mentioned a need for orientation:

With the cooperating teacher, together we tried hard to understand the [practicum] process for a month. I suggest that a committee should be sent to each school by the faculty at the beginning of the year in order to give information to the students and the cooperating teachers about the field experience process. This is very necessary.

Similarly, a cooperating teacher highlighted a need for an orientation program to minimize the identified problems:

In our school only one cooperating teacher was invited to the orientation meeting. If all the cooperating teachers had been invited to that meeting, we could have understood the process clearly and therefore may not have experienced such problems.

A lack of a regular university supervisor was identified as problem by the student teachers. One student teacher noted the need for more university support:

I wish I had a supervisor from the university to consult regarding any issue about teaching. I come to the school only on Tuesdays. Therefore, if I have a problem I have to wait until Tuesday to get help from my cooperating teacher. Aside from field experience, I have faced problems related to other courses. If there were a university supervisor, I would ask for assistance not only for the field experience but also for other courses. What is more, a second pair of eyes on my work would help me a lot.

Similarly, another student teacher stated:

The supervision by only a cooperating teacher is not sufficient. It would be superb to have a university supervisor with an MA. in the field. Also, I wish I had a university supervisor who is an assistant professor or an associate professor.

#### Problems Reported by Only Student Teachers

The qualitative analysis revealed three main themes regarding the problems of the student teachers: (a) assessment, (b) computer-mediated communication (CMC), and (c) a feeling of isolation. Themes and issues recognized within these themes are supported by the student teacher responses in the following section.

**Assessment.** In the blended program, student teachers are required to attain a mark of 70 or above to pass a course, which most of the student teachers find very

difficult to achieve. Therefore, they regard the assessment system as very strict and identify it as the cause of a low percentage of graduates. One of the student teachers commented on this as follows:

To pass a course you must get 70. If you get a cumulative average of 69, you fail. Because of just 1 mark you have to take the course again, which means to repeat the class. I have a lot of friends who repeated their classes once or more. Out of 52 student teachers only 2 of them achieved to graduate in four years. The rest had to repeat their classes due to this strict grading system. That is why the first graduates (of the blended programme) were very few.

Student teachers also think that such a strict assessment system negatively affects their psychology and is their most important source of their stress. One of the student teachers report his feelings as follows:

What tires us is not the field experience, but this grim assessment system. The institute has to find a solution to this. I understand that quality is important. But quality can not be achieved by putting all the student teachers under such a great pressure.

**Computer-mediated communication (CMC).** Course books are the main resources for the distance student teachers in the blended program. An online support system was designed to help the student teachers understand the course books better. It also provided the student teachers a tool with which to communicate with the course instructor and their peers to receive instructional support. However, some of the student teachers mentioned that not all the student teachers have a computer in their home or access to the Internet, which could compromise the equivalency in distance learning. One student teacher stated her concern in the following quotation:

I often used the online support system, since I have a computer and internet at home. Therefore, I was successful at the courses and passed the 4<sup>th</sup> class. But I had friends who did not have a personal computer and internet access, which means a big shortcoming. From that point of view I find myself lucky. But what about the others who do not have the same opportunity as I have? They are likely to fail and prolong the graduation.

Another problem related to the online support was the timeliness of feedback. A student teacher commented on this:

For the 4<sup>th</sup>-year students who are doing their field experience, there is a discussion board on the website. If there is something we do not understand about the course, we can e-mail a question. However, the feedback is always late. I waited for months for an answer.

**A feeling of isolation.** A feeling of isolation was another cited problem. Many of the student teachers reported that they would like to meet the instructors of the courses they take online. One of the student teachers states his desire as follows:

The institute could organize orientation meetings for the student teachers which offered the opportunity to meet all the course instructors whom we know only from the distance. If we met the course instructors, this could encourage us to begin the university willingly. We only meet the staff at the Open faculty office

administrator in the city of where the student teacher accommodates and the instructors of the courses during the face to face training. It is interesting that I do not know my university. My friend asks me about the university and Eskisehir. But, I cannot tell anything since I know nothing about it.

#### Problems Reported by Only Cooperating Teachers

According to the analysis, cooperating teachers' problems fall into two main categories: problems associated with the program and problems associated with the student teachers. A further analysis of these themes was conducted that resulted in sub-categories. These themes are indicated in the following:

**Heavy paper workload.** Some of the cooperating teachers were not satisfied with the amount of paper work required by the evaluation process. A cooperating teacher commented on that process:

The evaluation procedure is too much. I believe that instead of completing an observation form for each student teacher observation, giving general feedback with regard to the strong and weak aspects of the student teacher performance and filling out only one evaluation form (for each student teacher) at the end of the term would be much better.

Another cooperating teacher commented:

Both observation forms and evaluation forms have a lot of items. It is very difficult to read and respond to all these items objectively for each lesson a student teaches, since I have difficulty remembering all these items. These forms should be minimized.

Most of the cooperating teachers suggested taking notes rather than using the forms:

I think a common problem for cooperating teachers is to complete the observation and evaluation forms for each student for every lesson he/she teaches. Instead of the forms, I think taking detailed notes about the weak and strong points of their teaching would be better. That is what I do, and at the end of the year I complete the forms based my notes.

**Student teachers not fulfilling their responsibilities.** One of the cooperating teachers indicated that the student teachers did not fulfill their responsibilities, and they were very irresponsible with materials. She commented:

I give my students a copy of my daily and yearly lesson plans and ask them to prepare their plans accordingly. My students lost my original plans.

Another cooperating teacher commented:

At our school there are a variety of resources such as TV and CDs to be used in language teaching. However, the student teachers do not use these resources and are not adequately prepared for their teaching performance. For example, before a lesson the student teacher should prepare some comprehension questions about the reading text that will be the focus of the lesson, but he/she does not.

One of the cooperating teachers explained that the heavy course program might lead to such irresponsibility. He commented:

Their lesson plans are not of high quality. This could be due to their heavy course load. They have to work hard to achieve a 70 to pass each course. Therefore, they cannot study for their courses and at the same time create good lesson plans.

**Irregular attendance of the student teachers at the cooperating school.** All student teachers are expected to attend the cooperating school for five hours per week. Unless the student teacher obtains permission, he or she may not take the day off. Interviews with the cooperating teachers revealed that the cooperating teachers are not satisfied with their student teachers' attendance habits.

One of the male cooperating teachers claimed that university support was essential for evaluating student teachers and likely would help student teachers take the process more seriously. She commented as follows:

The students do not attend the cooperating school regularly; they use any excuse for an absence...they do not enjoy coming here....However, the student teachers in the traditional program attend regularly....It would be better if the student teacher's attendance were monitored by somebody other than the cooperating teacher. This would help the student teacher to take his/her study more seriously.

Similarly, another female cooperating teacher mentioned her concern about the student teachers' absences at the cooperating school:

At the beginning of the practicum, the student teachers attend regularly. However, after some time, absences begin. Most of the students use their course exams as an excuse for not attending the cooperating school.

#### Discussion

A striking finding of the study is that lack of support by the faculty was indicated to be a problem by both student teachers and cooperating teachers. Research also supports that lack of collaboration may lead to cooperating teachers to encounter supervisory problems (Young & MacPhail, 2014).

Both groups highlighted a need for an orientation meeting. One explanation for this finding could be found in Ramanathan and Wilkins-Canter (2000). They found that most cooperating teachers received no specific training on supervision techniques. Therefore, the cooperating teachers did not feel adequately prepared to be effective supervisors. Likewise, less than half of the mentors in Cornell's study (2003) indicated that the cooperating teachers received adequate training as supervisors. The blended English language teacher education program provides an orientation to only those cooperating teachers who are group leaders at their school. The student teachers and the rest of the cooperating teachers assigned to supervise these students are not provided such an orientation. They rely on the handbook and a CD about the practicum process prepared by the faculty for the necessary information for an effective mentorship.

The cooperating teachers also highlighted the need for regular support for the problems they face throughout the year. Similarly, student teachers mentioned their need for supervision by a university instructor as a second supervisor. Many studies provide evidence that university supervisors contribute to a successful experience for student teachers and cooperating teachers (Griffin et al., 1983; Koehler 1984; Zimpher, de Vas, & Nott, 1980). Applegate and Lasley (1984) revealed that

one of the concerns of cooperating teachers was for the need for university supervisors to provide guidance and direction to both the student teacher and the cooperating teacher.

The university supervisor also acts as a bridge between the faculty, the cooperating school, and the cooperating teacher. Without a university supervisor, communication among these groups is likely to suffer. A lack of regular supervision by a university supervisor may also endanger the quality of the cooperating teacher's supervision (Young & MacPhail, 2014) since cooperating teachers are not donated with the expectations and purpose of field experience (Anderson, 1993).

This problem can be discussed in relation to social constructivism, which claims that learning occurs through interaction. Throughout the field experience period, the student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors are in close contact. The student teachers and the cooperating teachers have the opportunity for face-to-face interaction with the university supervisor for academic- or process-related problems. The student teachers in the traditional English language education program are supervised by both their university supervisors and their cooperating teachers at the school where they teach; their lesson plans are corrected, they receive oral or written feedback on their teaching practices, and so on. For student teachers, such interaction and constructive feedback provides a valuable experience for the student teachers to construct their own knowledge for learning (Faikhamta et al., 2011). However, a regular support of the university supervisors in the blended program is not accessible to the student teachers and their cooperating teachers in person, though they can share their problems and receive guidance from the university supervisor via mail, Email, or phone. Cochran-Smith (1991) mentions that pairing a student teacher with a single cooperating teacher fails to prepare the student teacher, as it limits him or her to learning from just one mentor and such one-folded support is not effective and does not cover learner needs (Tenenbaum, Naidu, Jegede, & Austin, 2001). In such a social context, where the collaboration and interaction is limited, student teachers unfortunately have limited opportunities to reflect on their beliefs, strengths, and weaknesses of their own teaching.

The lack of regular support from a university supervisor also compromises the equivalency theory, which states "the more equivalent the learning experiences of distance students are to that local students, the more equivalent will be the outcomes of the learning experiences" (Simonson, 1999, p.7).

The first problem identified by student teachers was related to the assessment. According to the grading system, the cumulative average score of these tests must be 70 for a student to pass a course. If the student teacher gets a grade below 70, he or she has to retake the course next year. The student teachers reported that the grading system was very strict.

The use of CMC comprises a vital part of the blended English teacher training program. However, the student teachers in this study reported that not all of the student teachers have the opportunity to use CMC, which can be a threat to having equal learning opportunities. Similarly, related literature indicates access to ICT (Forbes & Khoo, 2016), computer, and Internet (Ukpo, 2005) is limited in distance

programs. This conflicts with the framework of distance learning, which emphasizes that “the distance education systems should strive to provide equal learning experiences for all students” (Simonson & Schlosser, 1995, p.71). Similarly, Simonson (1999) states that “various communications systems, including asynchronous ones, can and should be used for distance education, as long as the goal of equivalency of experiences is met” (p.7). Another problem related to CMC indicated by the student teachers was the delay in feedback from the course instructor. A similar finding was mentioned by Savaş (2006), who found that in asynchronous communication there is a time lapse between sent and received messages. Regarding the inefficiency of asynchronous mode of communication, Offir, Lev, and Bezalel (2008) claim that rather than the synchronous mode of communication is preferred by students who are geographically isolated since the asynchronous mode of communication causes poor quality interaction, which in turn minimize learning (Kannan & Narayanan, 2016; Norburg, 2012). Another problem reported by the student teachers was that they felt isolated. In the same vein, Kirkup and Jones (1996) mention that isolation and individualization of the student is one of the most significant weaknesses of distance education. Similarly, in Ngoepe’s (2014) study the student teachers valued interpersonal interaction as a key quality and indicated it to be lacking. The primary role of CMC in the blended program is to help the student teachers enhance their understanding of the course content and to establish a rapport with their peers and course instructors. Such communication and interaction reduce student teachers’ feeling of isolation and make them believe that they belong to a part of a social community (Bloomfield, 2000).

According to the results, one of the biggest concerns of the cooperating teachers was that student teachers do not seem to take full responsibility during the practicum. Observing the cooperating teacher, making lesson plans, and practicing teaching in a real classroom are the main responsibilities of student teachers during their field experience. Lesson plans constitute an integral part of the student teachers’ evaluation and assessment process. Before sending the student teacher’s portfolio to the course evaluator committee at the Open Faculty to be graded, the cooperating teacher is required to grade the student’s portfolio, which consists of reflective journals, lesson plans, and observation and evaluation forms. Lesson plans comprise 40% of the total assessment. Therefore, to write good lesson plans and to achieve higher grades, the student teachers may ask their cooperating teachers for more help when preparing their lesson plans.

Another problem mentioned by the cooperating teachers was that the student teachers did not regularly attend the cooperating school. Student teachers are required to attend five hours per week, during which they observe their cooperating teachers and peers and practice teaching themselves. Most of the cooperating teachers highlighted the need for university faculty to assist in monitoring student teachers’ attendance. Snowden and Daniel (1988) state that “distance education systems, because of the inherent complexity and interdependence of their parts require ‘tighter’ management than conventional educational institutions” (p. 339). This belief is echoed by Rumble (1992), who states that the key to successful man-

agement of distance education lies in planning, organization, leadership, and control (p. 31).

#### Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore the problems of both student teachers and their cooperating teachers in the blended English language education program in relation to the field experience. This study is important in that it has provided the student teachers with an opportunity to voice their problems. Though the number of case study participants is limited, the findings shed light on the types of problems that student teachers encounter during their field experience. Cooperating teachers have significant influence on the quality of the student teaching experience (Glickman & Bey, 1990; Ngoepe, 2014). Therefore, it was also important to investigate the problems they face during the field experience to improve the supervising process. To improve the quality of the practicum period and mentoring, more guidance for the cooperating teachers is needed. Tjeerdsma (1998) suggested that cooperating teachers need to be trained in the techniques and methods of quality supervision if they are to function as effective supervisors. Because the value of the teaching practice experience in the cooperating schools seems to depend on the quality of the cooperating teachers, organizers of the blended English language teacher education program should pay more attention to the selection of cooperating teachers. Along the same lines, Sampong (2007) claims that distance pre-service teacher education is executed efficiently when the practicum component is planned properly and is well supervised by qualified master teachers. Therefore, cooperating teachers should be selected based on specific criteria. If the selection of cooperating teachers focuses on traits that are known to be effective, it is likely to increase the quality of the cooperating school placements and ultimately the quality of the field experience.

Robinson (1997) outlined the problem and stated that stability of quality in the practicum is very difficult for students spread over a large geographic area. It is challenging to understand cooperating school conditions from a centralized point of control. Therefore, further studies are needed to build on the information provided by the present study. For example, CMC is a vital part of the blended program and has two functions. The informative function enables the student teachers to better understand the content of the courses. CMC offers the student teachers access to supportive information and increases opportunities for them to exchange ideas, ask questions, and receive feedback. Through the use of Email and discussion boards, student teachers communicate with their peers and their course experts about their experiences during school-based teaching, which addresses the socialization aspect of the CMC. Further research with a qualitative analysis of these communications would be valuable, as such information could shed light on the types of problems student teachers face during their field experience and whether CMC helps in the socialization of student teachers. Related to the use of CMC, student teachers also reported that they face problems such as delayed feedback. Therefore, another suggestion for further research is a study focusing on the student teachers' and cooperating teachers' evaluations of CMC.

The present study will be significant to teacher education programs offered in distance or blended formats. Successful program development occurs because of evaluation. Therefore, the problems identified in the present study should be regarded as constructive feedback by the program and used for the implementation of new programs.

The results of this study contribute to an increased understanding of the problems that student teachers and their cooperating teachers face during field experience at an English language teacher education program offered in a distance format. This study provides suggestions for establishing more effective mentorship during the field experience in relation to student teachers' socialization. Kirkup and Jones (1996) summarize the most significant weaknesses of distance education as (a) its inability to offer dialogue in the way that conventional face-to-face education does, (b) the inflexibility of its content and study method, and (c) the isolation and individuality of the student. Therefore, cooperating teachers who mentor student teachers in distance-learning teacher education programs should be aware of the importance of socialization and should implement orientation meetings for student teachers.

Establishing a closer link between teacher educators and cooperating schools improves teacher quality (Metcalf-Turner & Fischetti, 1996; Johnson, 2003). The quality of the student teaching experience is extremely important and depends on strong collaboration by its members (Darden, Scott, Darden, & Westfall, 2001; Koz, 2012; Koz, 2011; Zulu, 2016). Cooperating teachers need to be supported by the university to perform their roles as mentors effectively. A stronger partnership needs to emerge between the university and the cooperating schools to increase communication and provide a more beneficial experience for the student teachers.

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## Use of training technologies in teaching Azerbaijani history at higher schools

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**Abstract.** In the twenty-first century, there is a great deal of paradigms and fundamental changes in the theory and practice of pedagogy in the world of knowledge and society. Over the past decade, he has created a number of urgent issues that are expected to be resolved in the light of the reforms implemented in the education system in Azerbaijan. One of them is the systematic use of educational technologies in the history of Azerbaijani history. This work should be preceded by other areas of social life, because there is a need for well-educated and vulnerable citizens. It is precisely this kind of expression, psychological, psychological, general professionalism and intelligence.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan history, effective adoption of historical knowledge, training technology, the level of development of the training, essence of training technologies and their classification, higher education, information society, high knowledge and skill training

The use of training technologies in the education system also requires the necessity of bringing the factor of need to the human factor in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Highly qualified companion civil society brings a lot of benefits. Taking into account this need, the prime minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan I. Aliyev has always been in the center of attention to raise the level of education. This is clearly reflected in the reform programs in the education sector of the Republic of Azerbaijan - 1,2,3 and orders 4,5,6 items.

In accordance with the requirements of education reform in the country, educational institutions are equipped with modern training equipment, cash registers and paging software, developing computer centers, electronic libraries, software and

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training of teachers to computer literacy, more and more, culture of coinage. The short-term (teacher's) courses devoted to the introduction of training technologies in the country's educational institutions were organized.

The Education Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the development of education in the field of education is stated in the Education Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan: "Scientific studies related to the development of education are aimed at the development of the teaching process by modern methods and the development and application of pagan innovations in the field of education and other trends" (7).

According to the society's demands, the university faces the most important tasks. It is up to the professionals who are prepared for the community to develop self-motivation, creative work and the ability to master knowledge more effectively.

It is no coincidence that at the Finnish schools, the answer is, "What's the secret of our success?" Indeed, in Finland the teaching profession is as prestigious, sacred and valuable as medicine and jurisprudence.

At a time when the information society is in the modern world, there are many challenges facing high school teachers in the Republic of Azerbaijan: to constantly improve their knowledge and skills by working independently, raising their social activism, professionalism, modern training technologies, and resolving any uncertainty in a strong information flow make effective decisions, and so on.

In today's world, the use of modern training technologies in the higher education system is one of the requirements and needs of the innocuous development of the infected society. From this point of view, academician R. Mehdiyev writes in his article "Social and Humanities: Looking at the Coin from the 'Time': "In the age of globalization, infatuation technologies and the rule of the universe, the educational process is not built up with obsolete methods" (8, No.225, 2009).

Studies show that the principal difference between the modern educational system and the traditional education system is its inequality and high quality teachers.

Education technologies in the Republic of Azerbaijan have not yet had a powerful tool, as individual composers, as well as a great deal of know-how. Due to its didactic capabilities in the training, there is no second tool comparable to the training technology. The efficiency of education in the infra-public society is determined by the level of use of training technologies. The modern education system is determined by the level of use of training technology. The education system of the country creates a basis for the realization of didactic principles such as individualization, individual approach, differeisation, humanization, humanization, integration and optimization in the learning process, maximizing the use of this technology.

Studies show that in order to improve the effectiveness of training by applying the best training technologies in teaching Azerbaijani history in higher education institutions, there are the prerequisites for the solution:

First, students must be trained in technology and training;

Secondly, raising both theoretical and global co-operatives of Azerbaijani history teachers of higher education institutions and the use of information and telecommunication technologies should be continued without fail;

Thirdly, the training tools, training and methodologies that are introduced in the teaching process should be harmonized, and modern pacific technologies should be used.

In paganogo literature, they do not give a meaningful comment on the essence of the concept of training technology. Many experts say that the teacher's work is still "mechanized" and remains a handicraft. There are a lot of skeletons that should be so because the old man can learn and learn. However, the development of training technology shows that. It is possible to create a technological process for teaching each subject. Technological specialists develop "training programs". When working with those projects, teachers will be the adviser, the organizer. Most of them think of disrespect towards teachers. But it is important to remember that historic methodists have used their modern work and lesson plans for them. A teacher who has been exempted from outdated labor deals with pagagic work in the true sense of the word and develops students. The issue of personality, creativity, and lexiconisation in the training is not really a simple matter and should be solved.

In Pagagic literature, the following definition of training technology is described: "When training technology is understood, advanced optical didactic principles are understood. In addition, in practice, training technology identifies the teacher's methodologies and prerequisites developed from any technological perspective, and finally, the mathematics and methodologies of education. "

It should be noted that the principal solution, which is solved with the help of training technology, is the management of the learning process. The core of Protoment is the information-communication medium.

The following functional components of the history teacher's activity are used in the application of modern training technologies:

1. Consistent Configuration;
2. Designer project;
3. The Comprehensive Approach;
4. Organizational support;
5. The communicative device.

The History Teacher must perform the following operations consistently when performing training courses.

- ✓ Operation for acquisition (acquisition) of knowledge;
- ✓ Operations to design the training and education objectives;
- ✓ Determination of the structure of training and upbringing;
- ✓ Training and education operations;
- ✓ Operations to transfer knowledge to students in lectures and seminars.
- ✓ One of the important components of modern training technologies is the interactive training method.

*"Intuitive learning envisages the learning that is based on the active cognitive learning of learners and in collaboration with other participants in the education process."*

*"Intuitiveness" means "dialogue, mutual influence". It is also used to describe the training method, such as "prolemme-dialogy", "pragmatic" and "eccentric training".*

*Intuitive training is a combination of teaching and learning activities and management. The following peculiarities for this training are typical:*

- a) Creating a conceptual understanding of the situation by the teacher;
- b) Catalyzing the active researcher's position on learning the prerequisite;
- d) Creating opportunities for learners to gain independent knowledge and knowledge acquired independently.

The essence of this approach is that learning is not only about enriching the memory of the learners but also the acquisition and adoption of greater clarity on the basis of regular thinking, the most important training skills and skills, personal qualities and abilities.

Historians should have a high degree of coherence to introduce new training technologies. "Compatibility is a competent specialist. The Latin word literally refers to a series of questions that are inherent in human beings, and that they are mastered by the practice and practice of their being mastered." (11)

When focusing on the level of development of modern training technologies, it is clear that in different years, different scientists have not been so meaningful to other methods. According to M. Jeremoyow, "... working in an intensive mode, interviewing, dialogue, and talking about co-operation with other people. Intuitive training is a dialogue between teacher and student" (12, p.42).

Y.Kulagina writes: "Intuitive learning creates a potential for teachers, students, and students to develop mutual understanding, co-operation, freedom of expression, independence, and development of cognition and entrepreneurship. The author further points out that an interactive learning tool can be used to build up modern classrooms at all levels of education. The organization of the training in group, religion, dissatisfaction, research and dispute is of particular didactic significance" (13, p.7).

A.Minseva and Y. Surmayevan, in their article on training technologies, suggest that "... the creation of purposeful projects in accordance with the content of the training, the use of historical facts, the disclosure of historical events, and the organization of creative works on the study of historical documents of different content" (14,97-98 ).

A.Xutosky characterizes the positive trends in training technologies: "... the use of training technologies is meaningful, and it creates a positive outcome for students in learning the world of science, and the diversity of learning content and content contributes to the development of learning skills in students. Practical exercises in the form of group are the basis for communication between students. When students are grouped, there is a need to compare, analyze, apply, analyze, analyze, synthesize, analyze, and modelize" (15).

In his article on T.Omina's (16, pp. 45-53) history teachers, he focuses on actual and interesting issues. The article has a special didactic significance.

Y. Vyazemskiy (20) summarized the lessons learned in his work on the theory and the teaching of history, confirming the philosophy of teaching history and the teaching of its educational technologies (17).

According to V.Bespalkoya, it is possible to cope with any difficult problem only with the help of training technology. He writes: "Any activity is based on technology. Everything starts with art, ends with technology" (18).

In the literature on the history of teaching the history of Azerbaijan in high schools is the textbook of I.Kabrayilov's "Teaching of the history of Azerbaijan" (20). The methodology of teaching Azerbaijani history is studied as a field of pedagogical science, the programs and textbooks are analyzed, and the logical sequence of the ways in which the students' cognitive activity has increased.

I. Hasanbayrov's research on "Theoretical and Practical Principles of Teaching Azerbaijani History in High School Higher Education Schools" (21) is of particular importance. The author studied the principles of theoretical and methodological literature, principles, methods, methods and means of teaching the history of Azerbaijan, as well as the possibilities and ways of using historical materials in auditorium. The author's research was conducted in the framework of the training technologies.

In his article titled "Modernization of Higher Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Globalization Conditions" (22), H. Ahmadov was directed to the solution of the principles of higher education in the XXI century. The author outlines the following:

1) It is based on the fact that the process of globalization is influenced on various issues in the Azerbaijani society and its inevitable implementation has been studied; directions of influence of this principle on world educational space have been studied;

2) Analyzing the condition of the current system of education in Azerbaijan, it clarifies the carotid artery in comparison with the Avrupa stages;

3) Established the system of this work by defining the directions and directions of adaptation of the pedagogical indicators of Azerbaijan higher education to Avrupa standards.

Jabrayil Farzana's article "The distance education system and opportunities for improving the teaching method in higher education" (23, pp.29-34) is of particular importance. The article outlines the characteristic disturbances of distance education on the basis of the experience of both Azerbaijani and Iranian universities.

Despite all these studies, there is no need to use the training technologies in teaching Azerbaijani history in higher education institutions. There is a great need for the breastfeeding in this area.

It was clear from the research that there is no consensus on the precise definition of the classification of training technology used in the history of Azerbaijan. Classifications covering the traditional and innoculation of training technology are acceptable to academics.

When determining classification related to that, we have taken the following factors:

- a. According to the direction of training activities;
- b. For the purpose of the training;
- c. According to the content of the history of Azerbaijan;
- d. According to the application of technical equipment;
- e. For the organization of the training process;
- f. According to the subject matter of the subject or the subject.
- g. The following requirements should be taken into account when establishing training technologies in the history of Azerbaijan's history:
- h. Students should be treated as a sub-discipline of learning;
- i. Assessing each student as the most valuable asset;
- j. Taking into consideration the age and personal characteristics of the student in the teaching and upbringing process;
- k. Ensuring the maximum development of the student's personal abilities and capabilities.

The classification of the best training technologies we need to apply for the application of higher education in the history of Azerbaijan in the bachelor's degree:

Behavioral Behaviors:

- A) BIBS;
- B) Aucino;
- D) Cluster-diversification;
- D) Questions;
- E) Removing the Understanding;
- A) Word association;
- F) Synthetic

2. Discussion Methods:

- A) Discussion
- B) Debates (cross-discussion);
- Z) Discussion maps;
- D) Sokrates dialogue;
- E) "Aquarium"

3. Role Modules:

- A) Relaxation (rally dialogue)
- B) Modulation;
- D) Staging

4. Guidelines:

- A) Presentations;
- B) Let's go.

5. Methods of research:

- A) Protein solution;
- B) Cubication
- D) Investigate the incident;

- D) Diagnostics;
- E) Preparation of the Project;
- A) Preparation of brochure bills and interviews;
- F) Resolutions tree;
- Y) The edge of a tree
- X) Reformations
- 6. Measures to develop logical thinking:
  - A) "Alcohol Removal - Synthesis of Synthesis"
  - B) Didactic Games
- 7. Methods for the development of critical thinking principles:
  - A) Meaning and ambivalence assessment:
  - B) Examining objects and events differently, and so on.
- 8. Creation methods:
  - A) Involvement of students in the development of poetry, poems, images and essays in the Seminal workshops:
    - B) the usual use of things;
    - D) Progression and so on.
- 9. Organizational Criteria:
  - A) Zigzag and mozika;
  - B) Carousel
- 10. Grouping Methods:
- 11. Methods of consolidation:
- 12. Use of multimedia technologies:
- 13. Use of coin cellular technology
- 14. Remote training technology;
- 15. Modular training technology;
- 16. Training technology training;
- 17. Different types of remote control equipment and so on.

The idea is primarily an oral activity, so the organization of the material plays a bigger role here. Different from writing, it is impossible to scrub the page and read the material again. The bad news is that the judge will not be able to grasp the essence of your arguments and you will miss the victory.

Although it is a verbal action, it is important to carry out the debates. All the great guys have good listening experiences. In the United States, a large number of drinkers admit that Barack Obama is trying to keep the pulse of the nation, and in Russia, the nation holds the pulse of Vladimir Putin (the joke of Kukushkin). That is, both of them know well what Americans and Russians are worried about and know.

If you do not listen to your competitors' voice carefully and do not understand their argument, you will not be able to refute these arguments.

The essence of the debate is that the third party, ie judges, is convinced that your arguments are stronger than their competitors. Strangely enough, the stratigraphy and technique used to reach the desired result can be complicated.

An example of the fact that Anar Isgenderov, the assistant professor of the Baku State University, said: "Babek Khurrami is in the heroic history of Azerbaijan": The teacher familiarizes both sides with Babek Khurrami with the following content: "Babak Khurrami" restores the independence of Azerbaijan, the main idea of liberation of the ignorant, the owner of our wealth and our country of Crusaders. For the first time in the history of the Crusaders, the red flag was marked as a symbol of freedom in the struggle against the cruel oppressors, and red dresses were worn. Therefore, the Arabs have called them Makkah (those who wear red clothes). The chief of the castle and cellar drink was Cavani. In 816, he brought a brave, brave Babe to the castle of Bezz. In that same year, Babek led the Crusaders after his death in battle with Abi Imran, the Arabian chief of Cavi. From the very first day, he raised the people to the struggle for freedom against the Arabs. The army was Abdulla (Babak's brothers), Tarhan, Aydin, and Rustam were Babek's co-workers. Villagers, urban residents, artisans, middle and large feudal lords were the main driving forces of freedom. However, the majority of those who had been given to them betrayed Babek. Nevertheless, Babak won five times in the Arabian Peninsula during the Caliph al-Mami period of 819-820. However, the Caliph sent a strong enemy against al-Muttashim Babek. On the 25th of September, 833, the Crusaders were defeated near Hamadan. In 835, Afshin was appointed as head of the Arabian garrison of Hudar ibn Qawus of Turkish origin. He mobilized forces against the Crusaders. At the same time Babek demanded that his prisoner be sent to his father by the captive son. Babak wrote in his letter to his son, "You are my son, if you were my son, you would follow me. It's a great honor for me to live a day free, to be a leader, to live as a slave forty years". However, in the year 836, the Crusaders defeated the Arabs in the Hashtadsar valley. In 837, two armies came to the aid of the Arab al-Qa'ifah. Afshin offered Babak peace. Babek did not accept it. On August 26, 837, the castle of Bezz began to emerge. He came out of the fort and came to Arran. On the way, Christian Sabl ibn Sumbat betrayed Baba to the Arabs. Instead, he received 20,000 dirhams. On March 14, 838, she was tortured in the city of Samira in Baba. "

Topic: "Babek Khurrami is in the Hero Valley of Azerbaijan History".

First-party spokespersons should try to convince judges that their positions are correct and must be confirmed by the expression of the subject.

The second party is trying to prove to the referee that the position of the confirming party is incorrect. It is worth noting that Babak Khurrami was presented in the heroic post in the history of Azerbaijan. He opposed Islam. The subject matter of the topic and the argumentation of its position on this basis is indispensable.

Both sides are trying to convince judges that they have the right positions by bringing strong backgrounds.

**Support and Evidence.** In addition to the argument, the audience presented arguments, citations, facts, statistical and other information that defended the position of the judge.

These arguments in the test are derived from research.

**Cross-cutting questions.** In this statement, the questions of the first team's spiker and the question of the spider's spider are summed up in the Cross-question. The information obtained at the cross-questioning session was expressed in the speeches of the next speakers.

**Judge's decision.** Judges, after listening to the arguments of both parties on the subject, make a decision that the position of the confirming party is more convincing, based on the findings of the decision, in the form of a special form of protocol.

Effective use of debates in the teaching of Azerbaijani history has the ability to carry out correct judgments in students, to make complex decisions and decisions, to clarify different points of view, to identify important questions that lead to a better solution of the problem, and to acquire knowledge independently.

We can say that, in the history of Azerbaijan, the development of the training technologies, the sense and logical synthesis based on vision, tuition, internal and external features, and the development of student thinking. In addition, it enhances the mobility in the learning process, eliminates the psycho-tension, and makes sense to facilitate logical thinking, empowerment, and develop students' skills on levels (knowingly - applying and analyzing the synthesis). Students are ready to apply theoretical and empirical knowledge creatively. This also creates a high level of expertise and personality-oriented development of students. The application of the training technology acquired in the research process increases students' self-esteem and self-esteem, and creates the potential for the implementation of theoretical knowledge.

It is clear from the research that the use of training technologies in teaching Azerbaijani history at higher education institutions is understood as the activity and the structure of the learning content and the structure of the training, the tasks and the work that is presented to the students, and the training and retention of the training. At the same time, the introduction of training technologies in teaching Azerbaijani history is a systematic catholology. The following are the organizational structure that regulates it: 1) the objectives of the training; 2) the content of the training; 3) training objectives; 4) organization of the training process; 5) student-teacher relations; 6) training activities; 7) The level of preparedness of the students makes it possible for theoretical knowledge to be realized.

The introduction of new training technologies envisages active / interactive lectures, multi-disciplinary trainings, coaching technologies, modular and technical trainings in individual workshops, workshops, workshops with small groups.

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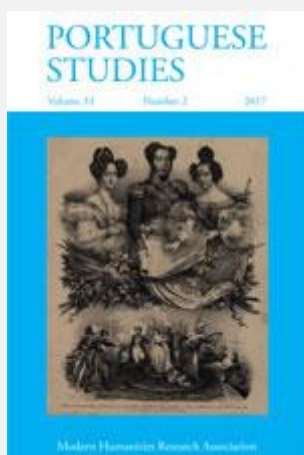
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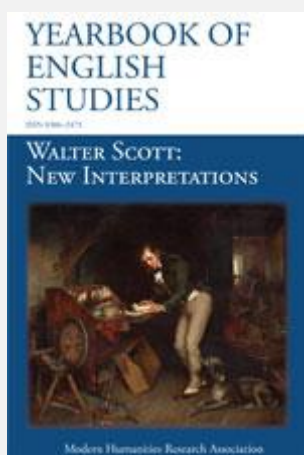
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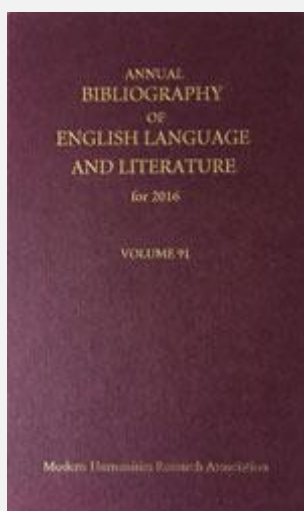


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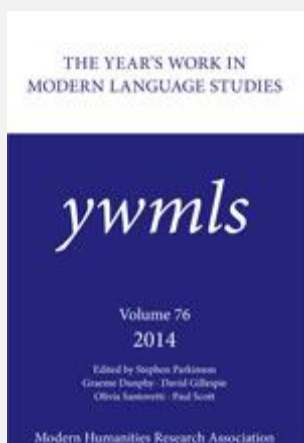
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